

# FEAR

FANTASY HORROR AND SCIENCE FICTION



## SAM RAIMI DARKMAN

**COMMUNION**

Mora breaks bread with aliens

**THE SECRETS OF  
ARKHAM ASYLUM**

**PLUS . . .**

**Stephen Gallagher,  
Sarah Douglas,  
and fiction from  
Ramsey Campbell . . .**

**INSIDE: PAGES OF HORRIFYING  
FICTION!**



# FEAR

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# NOUVEAU GOTHIC

talk and slash: the past two decades have, without doubt, provided the most graphic onscreen images of violence in the name of entertainment.

We've seen the births of Michael Myers, Jason Voorhees, Leatherface, Freddy Krueger and the amoral cenobites. Authors have given animals – rats, bears, pigs and sharks – a bad name. Yes, we are awash with blood and it appears that, to a large extent, what remains of intelligent storytelling has been drowned in dozens of OTT massacres and the odd rampage.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with the depiction of violence or the exploration of perversity in horror entertainment: writers such as David Schow, Joe Lansdale and Richard Laymon prove the point. But although excessive violence may not dull our revulsion of real death and destruction, it can anaesthetise us to the effects of horror's cutting edge.

Fortunately, as I hinted last issue, many writers and directors are being drawn to the original principles of horror as depicted in early films and in nineteenth century novels. Here luscious backdrops, weird characters, humorous energy and sexual tension take the place of the more obvious romps of unclothed teenagers in mattress factories or chopping malls. The emphasis is on desire rather than gratification, on suspense rather than climax.

Although I'm talking about a resurgence of the traditional principles of horror I do not necessarily mean a backward step to the days when the studios, left alone the censors, would not allow one gush of blood. Rather, the film industry should combine the sense of liberalism present in movies such as *Society* and *DarkMan* with a sense of Gothic proposed by the creatures of Frankenstein, Jekyll and Hyde and Dracula.

It is, after all, true to say that the creations most fondly remembered by generations of readers and moviegoers are the monsters whose deeds are only hinted at by their human progenitors. *Dr Jekyll*

and *Mr Hyde*, for instance, contains few scenes of violence, and yet the violence implicit in the thick atmosphere and characterisation is more effective than any explicit detail the writer might give. The potential for violence is there and it is more successfully realised in the mind of the reader/viewer than in images created by gore-oriented film directors.

The synthesis of horror 1980s-style with the creations of Stevenson, Shelley, Stoker, Poe and Lovecraft provides a way forward – a powerhouse of exotic images which combines with the realities of society today. That combination has already begun to spin tales for a new Gothic era of horror in the early Nineties.

Certainly, many film companies are beginning to pick up the threads of Gothic Nouveau, though perhaps many are misinterpreting it with somewhat pale, contemporary remakes of Poe classics. Whilst these provide an interesting pointer, they only mark a beginning, and remain way behind the white starting line.

I have already mentioned the movie *Society* as an example of the new Gothic movement. Its visions of shapes and terrors beyond

imagining are reminiscent of Lovecraft at his best. The same is true of another of director Brian Yuzna's films, *The Bride of the Re-Animator*, a Lovecraftian pastiche which has its roots in the Gothic past but also firmly in the present. William Friedkin's *The Guardian* also has that feel of a dark, unusual storyline tempered with today's special effects.

Similarly, Sam Raimi's *DarkMan*, previewed in this issue, gives us a Gothic anti-hero whose actions are, however, not constrained by the niceties of the late nineteenth century.

These are the films I believe will survive the decade and provide a new energy source for horror innovators. Stateside production companies are about to drop a bucketload of goodies onto our doorstep and, if fortune smiles and the events I've just discussed come to pass, we can look forward to an inventive decade and perhaps the demise of that Eighties phenomenon – the formula horror film.

**"The synthesis of horror 1980s-style with the creations of Stevenson, Shelley, Stoker, Poe and Lovecraft provides a way forward . . ."**

*John Gilbert*

Some people looked at *The Evil Dead* and laughed their heads off, some people were repulsed by it and walked out of the theatre. And some had a few laughs, a few scares, but were mostly just taken out on this joy ride. That seems like the proper response . . . But really, whatever people do is the 'proper' response.

Sam Raimi is sitting in his office in Los Angeles, a solitary picture of the Three Stooges on the wall behind him, pondering the diverse audience reaction to his now legendary first feature, and wondering how they will react to his latest and potentially most difficult venture, *DarkMan*. Raimi's movies have, in the past, been notoriously tricky to categorise – indeed, the achievement of both *Evil Dead 1* and *2* is that they operate within the conventions of horror and comedy without patronising or bastardising either; managing to marry generic traits (the insanely kinetic logic of slapstick, the paranoid claustrophobia of horror); intensifying rather than diluting the experience; creating that rare fusion, the terrifying comedy. Now in *DarkMan* Raimi is once again working across generic boundaries, eschewing the comic formulae which have underwritten his previous works, and turning his attention towards a more introspective nightmare.

As work on the picture approached the first rough cut, I asked him how he would define the new movie. 'It's a love story, but there is also a certain amount of action. I think it's most similar to a picture like *Phantom of the Opera* or *Beauty and the Beast*, or to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. It's about a creature wanting to be loved, really, but there are elements of the horror picture in it because I love horror pictures, and I don't feel I have to move away from them. It's just that this time I wanted to do something very different. I had never really made a movie that had real characters and a real story in the classical sense.'

## TRAGEDY

So how did the concept of *DarkMan* arise? 'It all started out as an idea: what if I could be anyone I wanted to be? That's always interested me. So I wrote a story about a man who could change his identity, change his faces. And then I went deeper and said, 'Why would a man have to change his face?' Well, possibly if he lost his own, and he had to assume other identities because he was too hideous to be looked on. I



then wrote a story about a man who loses his face and must become other people, other faces, and I went deeper still and thought how tragic it would be if he was in love at the time, for the woman that loved him to have to experience and go through this with him. So really it began as a love story and evolved into a tragedy. And it gradually became the story of the woman loving this man, and then learning the terrible truth about him, and questioning within herself whether she could still love

him – was it only a skin deep love, or was it real love?

I remind him of a light-hearted comment made by Bruce Campbell that the characters he and Raimi created in previous movies were rather unlovable, and that their own ineptitude frequently contributed to their sticky demises. Does he feel that he is now moving away from such an approach towards a more sympathetic appraisal of his protagonists? 'In this story, yes. But I don't know if it's any large movement of where

'Then I went deeper and said, 'Why would a man have to change his face?''



# QUERADES

**A monstrous hero with a heart of gold: that's what *Evil Dead* director Sam Raimi proposes in his brand new movie *DarkMan*. At his invitation, Mark Kermode hopped on the nearest plane to LA to talk about this stunning horror production, Raimi's plans for *Evil Dead 3* and his growing unease over British film censorship.**



I'm headed at creatively. I just wanted to tell this story, and I wanted to make it different to anything I'd ever done before. So I said to myself, 'Just don't move the camera around, you've done that. What you haven't done, what you can't really do and are afraid of doing, is trying to embrace real people, real characters.' It was something that was scary for me, that I've always been afraid to try. And I'm still terrified, it's not as if I've accomplished it yet. I'm more afraid than ever because I've now

shot the thing, and I'm cutting it and wondering if the audience will accept it. In *DarkMan*, I'm not falling back on the camera racing around the room, or special effects and new techniques that I love to play with; I'm trying to keep the camera very stable so it's not in the audience's face and so they're not distracted. I don't want them to be aware of the camera this time; I want them only to be aware of the characters. So it's all about the content within the frame rather than the movement of the frame

itself.'

Considering how mobile Raimi's camerawork has been in the past, was it difficult for him to constrain himself this time? 'Yes, very difficult indeed!' he laughs. 'I anchored that camera down with a bunch of sandbags and then went, 'What can I do?' But it wasn't hard to hold the camera still once I realised that I *had* to achieve the goal. However, it's obviously much more difficult in the editing process. In a horror picture you hear the noise, the character moves

to the darkened allé, the 'Loud-Big-Thing' appears . . . You stop the editing machine and turn to the editor - 'Yes, that'll work,' you say. In this picture, you watch the character as he watches his former love dance with another man, and you wonder if they'll feel something. It's much more intangible. It's not visceral, it's more something that they've got to put together in their heads.'

It's interesting that Sam Raimi cites Robert Wise's *The Haunting* (an exercise in understatement) as one of his favourite horror movies, and I ask whether he had felt the influence of that admiration in his creation of *DarkMan*. 'Well, I really respected *The Haunting* for not showing me what it was that was



"I said to myself, 'Just don't move the camera around, you've done that'"

scaring me. It was in fact a great study piece for filmmakers, because it leaves it completely to the audience's imagination, but gives you just enough so that you have the material you need to create in your mind something that's really frightening. You've got to get inside their heads, which I've never considered myself to be very good at. I've usually taken the slapstick way out in the past, you know: 'What is the audience thinking? I have no idea. I'll hit the guy over the head with pan and they'll laugh!'

Despite his resolutely self-deprecatory sense of humour, however, it is clear from his description of *DarkMan* that Raimi has developed a keen understanding of both character and audience, as well as an ability to empathise strongly with the predicament of his central figures. One factor which may have encouraged this development is the brief time Raimi spent in front of the camera, acting in the flawed but

nonetheless interesting *Intruder*. 'Well, that was a very different experience for me,' he explains. 'My friend Scott Spiegel who co-wrote *Evil Dead 2* with me got his first chance to direct, and he offered me a part. Being a poor actor, I accepted because I wanted to become a better director, and I wanted to have acting experience, so that when I'm directing I know how the actor feels. And I wanted to know how much direction is too much or too little, and what it is that the actors need in order to perform their job properly. They say the director has to be aware of every job on the set so that he can conduct the symphony of making the movie properly. I wanted to know what it was like, and also simply to be able to say to myself, 'Yes I can basically say a line on camera without panicking and understand the basics of moving from A to B . . . ' So I took the part in order to learn.' And did you enjoy the finished film? 'Um . . . er . . . It's okay. I think Scott was

Sam Raimi on the set of *DarkMan* (top), and sparks fly in an electrifying scene from the movie (above)

very rushed, and he had no money. They weren't very kind to him in the editing process, and they didn't let him do the proper sound job that he could have done.'

Indeed, Raimi has in the past been on the wrong end of studio interference; his ambitious comedy project *Crimewave* was extensively edited and re-sounded against his wishes, and the result was unsurprisingly dire and directionless. Bearing this in mind, I ask whether he is now approaching a position whereby he has total control over his movies. 'No, not yet. This picture is being made for Universal and again they have final cut. I'm not that powerful a filmmaker. Universal had a lot of input on this script and a lot of choice on the selection of writers, and the selection of actors



DarkMan presides over a display of pyrotechnics (above) and bizarre puppetry (left). Photos: Melinda Sue Gordon © DarkMan Productions

and actresses, and I hope it will end there, but they may have a lot of say in the editing process. It's still too early to say.

## DEAD BOUND FOR BLIGHTY

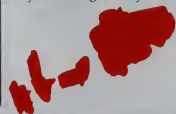
Looking towards the future, Bruce Campbell fans will no doubt be pleased to learn that *Evil Dead 3* is now definitely on the cards and, if all goes well, it may be somewhat closer to home than its predecessor; since British audiences were warming to the original *Evil Dead* (thanks to the efforts of Palace) long before any American distributor would even touch the movie, Raimi insists that a debt of gratitude is due, and he's decided to repay that debt by bringing *Evil Dead 3* to Blighty. 'It's my way of saying thanks. It takes place in England, and English actors will certainly star in it along with Bruce Campbell. It'll be similar to *Evil Dead 2* with a little less comedy, a little more intense. His eyes light up, and suddenly he's in full flow... 'It picks up where we ended - Bruce Campbell will be fighting for his life, battling the demons in 1300AD... the

Medieval Dead! There he will encounter the armies of the dead who pull themselves up from the graves; rotting corpses in rusted suits of armour riding skeleton steeds, and they'll lead a British thirteenth century army in a battle with the army of the evil dead. It'll be a lot of fun, I think!'

It's ironic, however, that whilst Britain provided Raimi with the springboard from which to launch his directing career, it was also the scene of one of the most vitriolic campaigns against his work. During the 'video nasties' scare of the early Eighties *The Evil Dead* was hauled through the courts on various ridiculous obscenity charges, and has subsequently proved something of a bugbear for the British Board of Film Classification. Head censor James Ferman revealed recently that, after much deliberation, the board has finally approved a 'significantly cut' version of the film for video release, an encouraging development although one which still raises serious questions about the practice of censorship in general. Raimi is clear in his opinion on the matter: 'Those guys at the

censorship board have their underwear on too tight. It's completely unacceptable that the government determines what people can and can't see. I thought we got past all that back in the late Thirties and Forties. What I don't like is the superiority and the smug attitude that they can see such things and they won't be affected by them; they're superior to everyone else. They can take it, and they've seen it, yet they're making a decision that others are too weak, too emotionally unstable to handle it. Well... what are they talking about? I don't know, I think they should ban the censor board. That should be the first thing they ban. Actually, the real problem is not a movie like *The Evil Dead*, because it's not really important whether that is seen or not by people: the problem is, once the people allow these censors to determine what's right and wrong for them, once they've given them that power, who's to say that a politically disturbing picture, that differs from the view of the censors politically, shouldn't be censored? The people of Britain shouldn't allow them that power because soon they'll find that other rights are being taken from them one by one, till they don't have the right to speak out at all. Where does it all stop? There's only one absolute freedom, there's nothing else. You can't begin limiting input, it's too dangerous.'

My own feelings entirely.



**"Those guys at the censorship board have their underwear on too tight"**

# AT HOME WITH STEPHEN GALLAGHER

Dave Hughes travels north to meet the author of *Valley of Lights*, *Down River* and *Rain*.



Gallagher in his home-based office

Stephen Gallagher lives with his wife Marilyn, his three year old daughter Ellen and Alina, a Siberian Husky, in the Ribble Valley. Although he spent the early part of his career

in London, Steve decided to move nearer his roots in Manchester when he became a freelance writer in 1980.

As a researcher for Yorkshire Television and director of Granada's lunchtime news programme, Steve felt he had the 'correct degree of cynicism' to become a novelist. 'The first book I wrote was *The Last Rose of Summer*', says Gallagher relaxing in his living room which almost overflows with rare and fascinating books, ranging from Stephen King proofs to early editions of *Dracula*. 'It was originally a radio script, so I suppose it was a kind of novelisation.'

Although *Chimera*, published by Sphere before he transferred to New English Library, gave him some financial stability, it was *Valley of Lights* that brought him to the forefront of the horror/thriller crossover genre, even though it was not, he says, a book he wanted to write.

He had intended to write a 7,000 word short story, but 20,000 words later: 'I knew it was going to be a little more than a short story and that pissed me off mightily because I

needed a short story to pay the mortgage - the last thing I needed was a third unsold novel. *October* hadn't been sold at that stage, and I'd recently completed work on *The Boat House* [the book that will follow Steve's new hardcover, *Rain*] which I didn't see could be sold before *October*.'

At the end of 1985, however, Steve's new agent looked through the three books and submitted *Valley of Lights* to New English Library, who bought it in a package with *October*. The latter was initially planned as a paperback original to be released to promote the *Valley* hardcover, but there was enough faith in *October* that it was launched in hardcover. Although Gallagher is without doubt one of the country's most talented genre writers, his home shows that he is as much a fan of fantasy as any of the

thousands of followers of his work. The pictures on his walls range from discreet, framed hardback covers to original artwork by comic artists Bill Sienkiewicz and close friend Bryan Talbot. The books on his shelves are predominantly editions of his own work, yet there are also American limited editions of the works of other writers he admires.

There are a very few things around the house that betray his obvious financial success for, although the house is beautifully decorated and two brand new cars stand in the driveway, it seems to be things of sentimental value that he values most. For example, a dolls' house replica of the writer's home, built by Steve's father and valued at more than £1000, is obviously a cherished heirloom, though I suspect Ellen plays with it just like any other toy.

One begins to suspect that while he is now comfortably off, Steve has known enough financial hardship to ensure that he never becomes complacent. For this reason, among others, he is determined to keep writing quality stories.

His latest book is *Rain*, the story of young Lucy Ashdown's determination to find her sister Christine's murderer. 'Rain has its germ in the experiences I had when I first went down to London in the Seventies to try and break into the film business. What I actually ended up with was a job as researcher for Yorkshire Television, but in the weeks that led up to that I

had the most amazingly engrossing time moving from one cheap hotel to another, walking the streets of London and really getting to know the place. So what I wanted to do in *Rain* was recapture some of the spirit of that time.' However, when he went back to re-examine the situation, Steve found that London had changed, and not for the better. 'All the cheap hotels I used to stay in are now DHSS-owned, and the few hostels there are fill up very quickly, so mostly the kids just sleep on the streets. So some of the research I was unconsciously doing back in the Seventies was tempered by

**"Some of the research I was unconsciously doing back in the Seventies was tempered by experience of London in the Eighties"**

experience of London in the Eighties.

The first part of the book has Lucy establish that Christine was murdered, and then the main part consists of her travelling down from the provinces, staying in London, 'moving from digs to digs, sleeping on peoples' floors, staying one step ahead of a friend of her father's who has come down to find her and bring her back. So you've got her hunt for the killer, and her father's friend's hunt for her. What Lucy little realises is that while she's down there she more or less starts to take over her sister's role and identity, which brings her closer and closer to the fate that her sister suffered...'

After *Rain*, New English Library will finally release *The Boat House* which, Gallagher says, will give him the two years' research he needs for his next book. With *Down River* out in April and *Rain* already on the shelves, Gallagher fans have some catching up to do.

Steve with Alina, the Siberian Husky (below)







Grant Morrison

# DARK SECRETS

To the casual reader, *Arkham Asylum* is just another episode in the life of The Batman; but behind its pages lurks a dark history of controversy and censorship. For the first time since the graphic novel's publication, its writer Grant Morrison takes *FEAR*'s Steve McGinty into the hidden realms of the artwork and prose — realms that Warner Brothers would rather were not there . . .

**S**ince his creation, The Batman has undergone a variety of radical reassessments: the camp spoof version of the Sixties, the dark vigilante of the Seventies and, this summer, the rubber-encased copout that visited a cinema near you.

But Batman has been taken to new extremes by innovative Scottish writer Grant Morrison, with the recent release of *Arkham Asylum*, illustrated by Dave McKean and prophetically subtitled *A Serious House on a Serious Earth*.

It's April the first. In a Gotham free from continuity squabbles, the inmates of *Arkham Asylum* have taken the staff hostage and issue their demand: The Batman — alone.

On this memorable night, the abominable history of *Arkham* unfolds and Batman faces old adversaries: The Joker, Two Face and Killer Croc. He also encounters suppressed and unwelcome doubts concerning his sexuality.

'We didn't want to do the realistic *Batman*,' says Morrison. 'Our whole idea was to do a Batman which was a purely symbolic figure, which wasn't a man at all. Dave McKean described it as a totemic man/animal. A type of mythological creature as opposed to the Frank Miller and Alan Moore realistic superhero.'

Many writer/artist teams lack the collaborative approach. Often the final script is sent to the artist for illustration with no discussion in between. The McKean/Morrison partnership, however, proved to be inspired, as their discourses provided the spark to enhance the final script.

'To start with, I didn't know who was going to be illustrating the book. Berni Wrightson and Bill Sienkiewicz were



approached but, due to other commitments, had to turn it down. However, it turned out for the best when Dave got the job, as it was he who said to me: 'Why bother making it realistic?' It didn't start out being completely realistic, but I still imagined it as solid Brian Bolland type art with lots of shadows. Dave said: 'Let's make it fuzzy, then you don't have to pretend that it's real'. This completely changed the way I thought about tackling the final draft.

## FALLEN MADONNA

Three years have elapsed since the initial synopsis and proposal were sent to DC. One of the main sticking points was Morrison's uncompromising attitude toward his subject matter.

'I sent them the 64-page script and they phoned me up and said, 'We really like this

but . . . ' and went through it from page one. After this I said I didn't want to do it. I mean, what is the point of adult comics if we can't touch on these elements? Once there was some discussion, I got to keep everything.'

Or so he thought. Unfortunately, Warner Brothers bought DC and were concerned about Morrison's treatment of the character. 'After the expanded 120-page script had been written, Warner Brothers stepped in. The movie was coming out and they were worried that our version of The Batman would contradict theirs. They wanted a PG-rated *Batman* because they didn't want to jeopardise the \$50 million they had sunk into the movie. Because of this a couple of things came out. The Joker was originally dressed as Madonna. They didn't want this because they thought people would think Jack Nicholson was a transvestite. Is

this the conclusion you would jump to?'

## COLD CUTS

Amadeus Arkham is a brilliant yet predictably disturbed psychiatrist who in the 1920s brings his work home, and converts his house into the Asylum. 'In the middle of the book there is a cannibal scene where Amadeus eats bits of his own family. We weren't allowed to have cannibalism in a *Batman* book, so we took out all the captions which described what was going on. This made it really abstract. It's the scene where he kneels down in the wedding dress and there is this weird painting by Dave of a tribal Shaman. If you want to you can puzzle the whole thing out.'

The elevation of comics to a literary medium was no doubt assisted by DC's decision to censor verbs from the text. 'The word 'masturbate' came out. It

was in Arkham's report which was a pretty straightforward doctor's report, cold and clinical. I was told that you can't have 'masturbate' in a book about Batman. The word 'fuck' also came out. It was in the scene where The Joker pinches Batman and the original dialogue was: 'Take your fucking hands off me'. It was changed to: 'Take your filthy hands off me', because Batman never swears. He has a strict boy scout upbringing. I didn't really mind this being taken out as it was there as a shock effect.

Morrison's Batman is a far cry

David Bollen's theory of the implicit order. This guy was a maverick physicist and he had this theory that reality is unfolded out of a higher order, so this went in as a metaphorical idea. A lot of the ideas are shrouded. The scenes when Arkham visits Jung and Aleister Crowley are really there to tell you to go off and read a couple of their books which will allow the story to open up in another way. It's kind of like a game. What I wanted to do was to make a book that was also a mirror. So you get out what you put in. If you put more work

Batman to push glass through his hand. If we created new characters, these actions could be easily grasped and then you would lose the charge that you've done something different.'

The *Batman* movie made the *Caped Crusader* headline news for six months, during which time editions of Moore's *The Killing Joke* and Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* have been in constant demand. *Arkham Asylum* appears to have caught

who can write quite well and a bunch of tossers who couldn't grab a pen between their teeth. That, for me, is the problem with DC. You have guys writing out how things are in the DC universe, and you have to follow the rules. Unfortunately, the guys writing the rules are complete idiots. Why should you abide by an idiot's rules? It's just pulling down your imagination and your ideas and this annoys me. That's why I try to sidestep continuity and mess it up as much as possible.'



from the fearless character familiar to news-stands worldwide. 'We thought that if we were going to set the whole thing up as this psychodrama where the house becomes a human head and where all the characters become personifications of human fears and obsessions, what will we do with Batman? I thought Batman could be this anal compulsive character, the rod in the back and the clenched buttocks. So we thought that if this guy was afraid of anything, it would be sex. Sex is his big terror and that's the area The Joker starts assaulting when he appears.'

## MIRROR, MIRROR

The casual reader is in for a shock. *Arkham Asylum* looks like a *Batman* book and has a conventionally simple storyline, but it is submerged in complexities.

'One of the many things we tried to put into the book was

into it, it will reflect back much more. Arty farty, isn't it?'

For some, this may appear to be out of place in a superhero book. 'People say, 'Why bother, it's just a book about Batman?', but if you're going to do it why not have some fun and fill it full of information so that people can puzzle over it?'

One reason for such highbrow content was that it did not initially start as a *Batman* project. 'When I originally approached DC I said that I wanted to do a graphic novel about *Arkham Asylum* and about its characters and inmates. *Batman* didn't figure much in it. It was when I sat down to write the thing that he suddenly appeared and I had to do something about him.'

'The attraction of *Batman* and The Joker and all these characters is the way people bring preconceived notions to them. Part of the fun was turning these notions upside down. People don't expect

the tail-end of the bandwagon.

'We've profited from this *Batman* hype. Out of the 200,000 people who bought *Arkham Asylum*, most are probably kicking themselves, saying, 'What's this peculiar thing I've bought?' But that's their problem. Probably a lot of people were wanting me to rehash the *Dark Knight*. But what's the point in doing that? All these completely tragic characters at DC have been trying to do the 'New Dark Knight' for the last three years. Why bother? Frank Miller did it and that to me is the final expression of that type of *Batman*. It's really good and should just be left.'

Comic fans' demands for background information have often led to stories weighed down by lengthy exposition. 'Continuity is the bane of comics. It would be okay if it was continuity between six brilliant minds, but not continuity between one guy

## WHISPER

Last Autumn DC released the first new *Batman* comic since 1940. Each story has a separate creative team and will run for five issues. Current *Batman* and *Detective* editor Denny O'Neil returns to the character he revitalised in the Seventies for

**"Our whole idea was to do a *Batman* which was a purely symbolic figure, which wasn't a man at all"**

the first five issues, while six to ten will be written by Grant. His story is set to combine The *Batman*'s past, an ancient English castle and ominous Mr *Whisper* who is stalking the crime lords of Gotham. 'I've always wanted to do a *Batman* that was like an eighteenth century Gothic horror novel, something like Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*. What pisses me off is that they won't let me do The *Batman* as a real Gothic figure with big ears and all hunched over. There is actually this director at DC who gives the precise dimensions of *Batman*'s ears. It's totally outrageous. I thought it would be nice to have a *Batman* that uses all the eighteenth century ideas. There were always batloths of blood, weird castles, labyrinths, dungeons and cathedrals... All these images with *Batman* in the middle. I've asked them to do Gotham like a Pyrenean engraving where the buildings go up for ever with walkways and bridges.'

As the approaches to *Batman* become more literary, the character continues to thrive in the visual media: comics, television, cinema and boxer shorts. Yet one wonders whether a successful attempt could be made to transfer the character into prose. Me, I'll just wait for the pop-up book.

# URSA MAJORS

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a red top and diamond earrings, is holding a large, dark, hairy mask. The mask has a menacing expression with sharp teeth. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark.

"I, of course,  
just wafted  
around  
looking like a  
scientist,  
sucking in my  
cheeks, being  
cool"

# IN SWAMP THING

Film and television actress Sarah Douglas is renowned for the bitchy roles she's taken on the road to success. Her latest, in *The Return of Swamp Thing*, sees her playing opposite the evil Louis Jourdan as his lab assistant. Martin Clayden went to discover whether the infamous lady is really as mean as she seems.

Sarah Douglas is not the kind of actress to keep a low profile on screen. After scoring a major hit as Ursa, the leather-clad villainess from *Krypton* in

*Superman 1 and 2*, she later resurfaced as the evil queen taking on Arnie Schwarzenegger in *Conan the Destroyer*, before slipping into something more comfortable as the scheming socialite Pamela Lynch in the soap series *Falcon Crest*.

Her latest incarnation is as Louis Jourdan's scientific assistant in *The Return of Swamp Thing*, which is a million miles away from her mother's cosy home in Stratford-on-Avon, where Sarah was first introduced to the noble art of acting.

"From a very early age I was having elocution voice classes from a lovely old *grande dame* of the theatre there, and when I was fourteen I joined the National Youth Theatre. At seventeen I was rather attached to a young man who worked in the milk factory, and I don't think it was what my mother wanted. She denies it, but I know it was because of him that she packed me off to France."

In France she was a nanny to a respectable Jewish family who spoke no English but took her on her first trip to Cannes ('Lying on the beach - very skinny, very bronzed, clutching my Shakespeare volume').

Years later, the family saw her in *Superman* following its premiere in Paris, and were clearly quite bowled over. Monsieur Spielmann, as I've discovered with a lot of Frenchmen, particularly liked my thigh-length black leather boots.

Even Sarah wasn't prepared for the Ursa-mania that followed the film's release, no doubt aided by the nine month world tour she embarked on to help promote the movie. 'I still get lots of weird and wonderful mail. There are video bars in San

Francisco that I've hit once or twice where they love Ursa and Joan. Collins and they splice all their scenes together! I also have a terrific gay following, as Ursa seems to stand for something, though I don't know what, for all I did was go round beating up men. There's another whole group of men who've written very rude letters saying what they'd like to do to Ursa, and as for the mail I get from some ladies, you wouldn't believe it...

Returning to Hollywood two years later, she made the most of her reputation for turning in a wicked performance, first with *Conan*, then in TV series. 'When I arrived in America I went straight into *Falcon Crest* and capitalised on the villainous bitchy image. While I was doing *Falcon Crest* I also did a mini-series of *V*, and the producers of both shows offered me the alternative of big earrings and nice frocks on *Falcon Crest* or playing a lizard on *V*. I opted for the frocks, but a couple of years ago I was in Ecuador at the invitation of the President who was a big *Falcon Crest* fan, and discovered that he was not half as big a fan as he was of *V*!

In *The Return of Swamp Thing* Sarah costars with Heather Locklear (former star of *Dynasty*) who falls for the heart-of-gold monster being threatened with extinction by the plotting of Louis Jourdan. The movie is littered with in-jokes, including one referring to the tattoo on the arm of Heather's real-life husband. 'She's married to this very strange chap from Motley Crue, who arrived with hair flowing down his back and tattoos, and they were the unluckiest couple you've ever seen. Also, Louis suggested that we call his parrot Gigi, and Heather has a disparaging line about *T J Hooker*, in which she has also starred.

## SATISFACTION

Conditions on the movie were hardly ideal. 'It was shot in Savannah, Georgia, actually in a



Evil deeds are afoot in the operating theatre (above) as Sarah and Louis ponder the fate of their latest victim; but off screen, swamp-hero and villainess team up for a promotional clinch (facing page)

swamp. There was this stuff that we covered over every inch of our bodies that was supposed to repel all - it managed to repel all for a good six months after. It was miserable, especially for poor old Swampy himself, Dick, in this extraordinary costume that was so heavy and so hot. I, of course, just wafted around looking like a scientist, sucking in my cheeks, being cool.

The *Swamp Thing* producers also produced *Batman*, and when Sarah finally saw it she nearly jumped out of her seat. 'I'm no gay divorcee and I noticed in one frame not one of my best men, but two! When I got married my husband was concerned for our many Jewish friends, so we had a Jewish best man and an 'ordinary' one'.

Before *Swamp Thing*, she appeared in a few low budget quickies, specifically chosen to pay the rent, like Mel Brooks' *Solarbabies* ('the most exciting part of it was having my nails ripped out because I found it so sexually satisfying'), *People That Time Forgot* ('another great epic shot in the Canary Islands in which I was hotly pursued by dinosaurs and Doug McClure') and *Nightfall* ('the hairdressing lady told us to hand in our Kirbygrips at the end of each day').

However, there is a new movie about Salvador Dali imminent ('you see me lying naked with seaweed and oysters on my body'), as well as one with her best friend, Grace Jones, 'with me being terribly English and conservative and Grace being graceless. The two of us are always getting into trouble, but I always get away with it'.

Ursa would have approved.

"There are video bars in San Francisco where they love Ursa and Joan Collins and they splice all their scenes together!"



# UNDERRATED!

**Why hasn't anyone made a sequel to the 1986 film *The Hitcher*? A gesture of genuine admiration for the taut modern horror — not degrading it with a second-rate follow-up? Probably not, argues Roger Kean, who thinks the film (Warner Brothers £9.99) starring C. Thomas Howell and Rutger Hauer has been unjustifiably ignored despite all its merits.**

**A**fter the claustrophobic terrors of the cityscape, the wide spaces of the American heartland come as palliation to both audience and hero Cary Grant in Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*. But as everyone knows, the sudden peace and lull in pace are only a director's cruel trick: no one can lie hidden in wait, ready to pounce in the flat wilderness, could they? and what could look more in keeping — and so harmless — than a crop duster plane buzzing drowsily in the agricultural distance?

In *The Hitcher* the seemingly endless desert of Texas has a similarly uneasy effect at the film's start; young Jim Halsey trying to stay awake in the early hours of the morning as he cruises along the highway in his 'drive-away' car toward California. It, too, is a chimera, and as with Cary Grant, the yawning emptiness is about to reveal a monster. Any comparison between *The Hitcher* and *North by Northwest* ends there, but Robert Harmon's dreadfully underrated movie bears much in common with *The Master*'s filmic obsessions and techniques (even down to the — fancifully possible — pun on Hitch's nickname?).

To start with, *The Hitcher* could easily be written off as yet another minor modern exercise in gratuitous terror — and was at the time of its cinema and then video rental release, but

underneath its thin surface story — often implausible, but then so were the best of Hitchcock plots — lies a gaping abyss which strikes at the very fabric of perceived and comfortable reality. And it is, inevitably, a parable. The plot is simple. Jim Halsey (C. Thomas Howell) has waited months for a 'drive-away' to California, an American tradition of getting youngsters to act as pool drivers to take cars from the Northeast of America for delivery to their buyers on the West Coast — a paid passage for the driver to a (hopefully) new life. In the Texan desert, to help keep him awake, Jim gives a lift to a gaunt-faced man (Rutger Hauer). The hitch-hiker, whose name is John Ryder, turns out to be a mass murderer, killing his hosts in horrible ways. Jim manages to eject Ryder from the car. From then on Jim's fright

**"To start with, *The Hitcher* could easily be written off as yet another minor modern exercise in gratuitous terror"**

develops into a full-blown nightmare as the *Hitcher* haunts his journey, murdering a family and an entire police station complement before the film is over. Belief that Jim is responsible, puts both the avenging police and Ryder on his trail; but the lurching hitch-hiker wants something special from Jim, something which only the boy can give him: he wants to be stopped. Like any classic Hitchcock character, Jim Halsey has slipped through the societal fabric into a hell he cannot understand or control.

In most Hitchcock movies the main protagonist is running away from a phantasm of their own creation — a fear real or imagined: James Stewart suffers from the eponymous vertigo

Underrated: Robert Harmon (left), *The Hitcher*'s director, has created a modern rewriting of some of Hitchcock's most haunting themes.



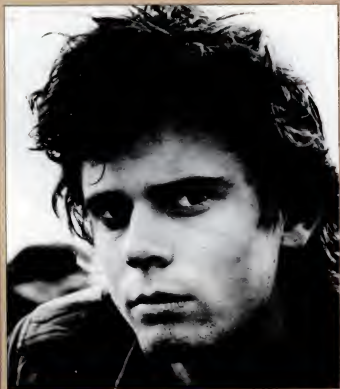
because he watched a fellow policeman fall from a high building when if he had had more courage he might have saved him; Tippi Hedren is afraid of her sexuality in *The Birds* and again is persecuted by the fear of rape in *Marnie*; Janet Leigh is fleeing after robbing her employer in the trick beginning to *Psycho*; there are others... In *The Hitcher* Jim Halsey is also on the run. Despite what the video packaging has to say about his mum warning him never to give strangers lifts, there is no mention of mum in the film, only a brother back in distant Chicago who never answers the phone when the police try checking Halsey's identity. Eric Red's sparse script manages to sketch in a dreary life back east from which the intelligent no-hoper is trying to escape for one better in California; into this thread of expectancy John Ryder comes as a nasty chunk of alternative reality, an almost supernatural force of pure evil. Halsey never wanted the intrusion, wants it to stop, and keeps asking 'why me?', as though life were supposed to be the acceptable norm he has become discontentedly accustomed to; he is simply unprepared for this demon that descends on him. And yet by offering the ride in the first place (a vampire must first be invited to cross the threshold of the house before it may enter), Halsey has taken a step of his own volition which will turn his life upside down.

Director Harmon returns again to an eminently Hitchcockian device when Halsey, pulled in by the local cops, is thrown in jail to await a senior policeman's arrival

for further questioning. Unhappy to be locked up and misunderstood, Halsey is at least safe in jail from the depredations of the persistent *Hitcher*. But waking from a troubled sleep, he finds his cell door unlocked and the station a charnel house. The *Hitcher* has been and gone, leaving the kid more terrified for the cynical act of opening his cell door while he lay vulnerably asleep than for the bloody carnage he has wreaked on the cops. It's the first indication that John Ryder, whoever he is, is more than a lunatic, perhaps an unstoppable evil spirit. Realising he will be held responsible for the violence, Halsey runs from the isolated station into the desert as a relief posse of cops roar up in their cars. There he wanders like a lost soul from a *Fassolini* film, a giving vent to a primal scream of terror and frustration because no one will believe that these terrible acts are being committed by a being who still remains invisible to all but Jim himself; he has been made into a non-person, stripped of dignity, civil rights and even identity, fleeing from the law and pursued by a hell-bound who terrorises him but won't even kill him yet.

Transference of guilt is a common theme in Hitchcock films, and there are echoes in *The Hitcher*, although Harmon rings a tightly cruel change more in keeping with the cynical Eighties. Stopping to phone the police at a fast food diner, Jim impresses the young girl who works there with his honesty. Later, escaping from the police, Jim sneaks onto a bus and hides as it pulls away from a wayside stop. The girl is also on the bus and recognises him, but





The face of undiluted evil meets discontented Innocence: (Rutger Hauer, left, menaces C. Thomas Howell, above) with a thoroughness all the more terrifying for the quiet intensity of his performance.

keeps quiet. The cops stop the bus and Jim decides to give himself up. Outside, as one of the officers, maddened by the slaying of his colleagues, is about to shoot the unarmed boy, the girl intervenes, threatening the cop with the stolen gun Jim threw out ahead of him as he left the bus. The two of them escape in a police car and hole up in a motel:

**"Halsey's life does a sideslip back into a recognisable reality, he is confronted with his worst terror"**

but they can't hide from the Hitcher. While Jim is showering, Ryder slips into the room and seizes the girl.

Ironically, at the very moment when Halsey's life does a sideslip back into a recognisable reality, he is confronted with his worst terror. Ryder has tied the girl between two huge parked lorries, and in the cab of one, has the engine running, the vehicle in gear and his foot on the clutch, threatening to rip the girl apart unless the police bring him Halsey. Jim's nightmare phantasm has become everyone's. Now the police believe him, they too can see the demon. But once again, only Jim can deal with it.

Entering the lorry cab, Ryder tells Jim to take a gun from the dashboard, and tells him that he knows what to do with it. If he doesn't shoot Ryder straight in the head, he will let his foot off the clutch and the girl will die. But Jim also knows that if he does as Ryder asks, and kills him, the madman's foot will still falter on


the clutch and it will be too late to save the girl. She must die whatever he chooses to do; she must suffer his guilt for him.

Why does the Hitcher want 'to be stopped', why must it be Jim Halsey who stops him? 'You're a smart kid,' he tells Jim, 'you figure it out.' And so the audience has to as well. Is Ryder Halsey's alter-ego, the evil face of an ordinary person? In which case the film is a metaphor: how Halsey copes with this test will determine what kind of a man he will grow into. Or are we to take it another way, accept that Ryder is, to some extent, a supernatural power, a true devil's advocate, whose function is to confront Halsey like an imovable obstacle of fate, forcing him to become as evil as Ryder in order to be able remove him; you become what you kill?

Whatever, *The Hitcher* retains much of its mystery, which is why it has the power to haunt the mind long after watching it. And for all of the above reasons, I think it is a deal more than a gratuitous piece of violence and terror. The fact that it is excellently lit, photographed, edited and acted, that it has a music score (Mark Isham) — which seems to be embedded in its stark images — obviously helps, but it is the questions the film raises rather than the pat answers which it eschews that make it not only an intelligent reworking of so many Hitchcock themes, but a disturbingly entertaining piece of fiction that deserves a wider audience than it has enjoyed.



# Man's dread fear is to be...



**"On one level,  
*Cannibal  
Holocaust* is a  
savage  
critique of  
media sen-  
sationalism  
and the  
whole Mondo  
school of  
filmmaking"**

# EATEN ALIVE!

**Are cannibal films simply a cynical excuse for gross displays of sex and gore, or does the fact that they flout every taboo give these works a radical edge? Julian Petley continues his voyage into the Mondo Cannibale with a look at more recent films dealing with this most disturbing of themes.**



In 1976 Ruggero Deodato made *Ultimo Mondo Cannibale*, which was released theatrically in

Britain in 1979, cut by four minutes, as *Cannibal*. Although the story itself is no

more interesting than that of Lenzi's *Deep River Savages*, the film is considerably better made and was equally, if not more, influential in laying down the developing sub-genre's basic ground plan. It also provides a foretaste of Deodato's crowning achievement in this area: *Cannibal Holocaust*.

The story revolves around Robert Harper (Massimo Foschi), who is sent to the Philippine jungle by an oil company in order to try and discover what has happened to two missing prospectors. Harper is captured by cannibals, but finally manages to escape with the aid of a young woman from the tribe (Me Me Lai, again). However, she is eventually killed and eaten, and Harper manages to escape only by

turning cannibal himself and thus intimidating his pursuers.

*Cannibal* is a million miles removed from the romantic, jungle-fantasy elements that dominate so much of Lenzi's film. The tone is set early on, when Harper discovers one of the missing members of his team being eaten by cannibals. As in the cannibal episode in *Deep River Savages*, the cannibals are represented as barely human, filthy 'savages' but the effect is all the more disturbing here thanks to the way in which Deodato directs the scene: in semi-darkness glimpsed through leaves and branches, with a shaky, seemingly hand-held camera giving the whole thing an uncomfortably documentary look. The Italian subtitle, which informs us that this scene is based on actual events, seems barely necessary.

Later on, Harper unwisely eats some fungi and loses consciousness. When he comes round he finds himself surrounded by cannibals. Still under the influence of the fungi, he is





Massimo Foschi (above) undergoes physical torment in *Cannibal* (*Ultimo Mondo Cannibale*), while in *La Montagne Del Dio Cannibale* (right) the accent is on weird tribal ritual



**"A male member of the expedition is killed by being used as an ingredient in a sort of tribal version of tug of war"**

captured and taken to the caves in which the cannibals live. Much of this is filmed subjectively from Harper's point of view, and again Deodato makes effective use of the hand-held look to give the scene a disturbingly 'real' feel. When Harper eventually arrives at the caves, the tribe members appear to be almost hanging from the walls like bats, and arranged in curious geometrical groupings that bring to mind Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. Harper is tied up and stripped to his underpants, until these are removed by the Me Me Lai character. Various tribe members then poke and pull at his penis and testicles. (From this point on in the film Harper remains stark naked for most of the time.) He is then suspended by ropes from the roof of the cave in an attempt to make him fly (the tribe having seen his plane land in the jungle), and when this fails he is imprisoned in a filthy cave with two ferocious birds, and periodically urinated on by the children of the tribe. When he tries to get Me Me Lai to help him she makes it clear that her main interest in him is sexual. When he does finally manage to escape with her he rapidly establishes his position of dominance over her by means of an energetic bout of rear entry intercourse.

## FEAR AND LOATHING

The above should give some idea of the incredibly harsh, Darwinian, 'Nature red in tooth and claw' aspect of *Cannibal*, as well as the

sexual dimension of the cannibal film, which becomes even more pronounced in later examples. As Steve Bissette has pointed out in *The Deep Red Horror Handbook*, the whole image of the cannibal 'embodies the fear and loathing Western colonialism holds for all primitive tribal people and is an oral metaphor for the colonial dread of Third World people lashing out against invaders of their native territories'. It is difficult not to see a strongly sexual element to that fear and loathing, which expresses itself most strongly in all sorts of myths about black male sexual potency, and in the numerous scenes of sexual humiliation, rape and castration which haunt these films to the point of obsession. And, of course, it should be remembered that the beginnings of the cannibal cycle, parts of which are set in South East Asia, do indeed overlap with a particularly dramatic example of Third World people lashing out against Western imperialism -

namely, the Vietnam War. Intriguingly, at least one marginal addition to the cycle actually manages to link the Vietnam and cannibal cycles. This is *Cannibal Apocalypse* (Antonio Margheriti, 1980), in which two GIs (one of whom is called Charles Bukowski, alias Charles Bronson!) are captured in Vietnam and forced to turn cannibal. On returning to the States they cause an outbreak of cannibalism in Atlanta, Georgia. *Cannibal* also contains its fair share of animal cruelty, including a fight between two snakes, a bat being crushed and eaten by a snake, and a revolting scene in which a crocodile is skinned before it appears to be fully dead. Again, this unsimulated violence is used to make the acts of (staged) violence to humans seem more real by association. For example, the scene in which a member of the tribe is punished by being tied up to be eaten by ants, or the climactic scene in which Me Me Lai is killed and eaten in stomach-churning

detail. Interestingly, this is one of the few scenes in a cannibal film in which the victim is cooked: having decapitated and disembowelled their victim, the cannibals split her trunk from top to bottom, wrench it apart and insert hot stones, wood and leaves. Harper's own excursion into cannibalism is slightly less graphic, though no less nauseating, and amply illustrates his own (and, seemingly, the film's) philosophy that 'everyone becomes a link in the chain of survival'.

## SEX RITES

*Emanuelle and the Last Cannibals*, also released in 1976, arrived in British cinemas the following year minus five minutes' worth of footage. It was directed by the infamous Joe D'Amato (Aristide Massaccesi), and was one of six *Emanuelle* films which he made around this time with Laura Gemser. In films such as *Anthropophagus* and *Blue Holocaust* D'Amato pulls off the difficult trick of being repulsive and tedious at the same time, and unfortunately *Emanuelle* tends to fall into the same category. The story concerns a young journalist, *Emanuelle*, who discovers in a New York psychiatric ward a young girl recently found in the Amazon jungle and who appears to have been raised by the Apiaca, a cannibal tribe long thought to be extinct. She decides to set up an expedition and go in search of these 'last cannibals'. The film is interesting in that it introduces the figure of the ruthless journalist (soon to become a key element in the cycle) who will do anything for a scoop, and also because it includes a scene of allegedly documentary footage. This occurs early on in the film when *Emanuelle* goes to visit the anthropologist, Professor Mark Lester, who shows her some 'documentary' footage of tribal rites, including what appears to be a graphic castration. Like Deodato's 'documentary' camerawork, this is another example of the cycle's deliberate playing with the audience's sense of 'fact' and 'fiction'. Not surprisingly, given the context, the film also plays up the sexual dimension mentioned above. A frustrated female member of the expedition has sex with a well-muscled black bearer, the Apiaca use another for sex rites, and the 'steamy' jungle atmosphere is further heightened by a good deal of masturbation (female, inevitably). There are two graphic disembowellings, and a male member of the expedition is killed by being used as an ingredient in a sort of tribal version of tug of war. The tone of the film is perhaps best summed up by the way in which the director intercuts a nude bathing scene (with vaguely lesbian overtones) with shots of a

chimpanzee rifling the bathers' picnic basket and trying to light up a Marlborough! In other hands, the combination of sex and gore might just have produced something startling, but as it is the mixture fails to spark and never rises above the level of the mildly distasteful.

## MASS KILLING

The release of the infamous *Snuff* (also in 1976), though definitively revealed to be an obvious fake, can't have done the cannibal cycle any harm. (Indeed, a film like *Cannibal Holocaust* is fifty times more convincing than the all-too-obviously-phoney *Snuff*). Two years later the first in the *Faces of Death* series was released. This was a film very much in the tradition of the Mondo cycle, which in fact had never really gone away, and



In the fictional *Cannibal Holocaust* (above) documentary filmmakers are both aggressors and victims, while films such as *Sobre Vivientes De Los Andes* (top) reenact the horrors of real life events

although at first it was something of a flop it later came to enjoy huge success on video and has given the whole genre (which artfully mixes documentary footage with staged reconstructions) a tremendous boost. (For an incredibly detailed history of Mondo movies see the excellent *Psychotronic Video*, Nos 3 and 4.) And November of the same

year (1978) saw another of those real-life events, like the Andes plane crash, which seemed to give the cycle new life. This was the mass killing of the disciples of the Reverend Jim Jones in Guyana, which would find its way into Lenzi's *Eaten Alive* (1980) and Deodato's *Cut and Run* (1984). Outside the cycle the massacre was also the subject of Rene Cardona Jr's *Guyana - The Crime of the Century* and the excellent US TV mini-series, *Guyana Tragedy - The True Story of Jim Jones*.

In 1978 Sergio Martino made



*Prisoner of the Cannibal God*, which was released in British cinemas minus two minutes of running time. The interesting thing about this entry in the cannibal stakes is the calibre of its stars—Stacy Keach and Ursula Andress. Ever since *She*, of course, the latter has been something of a staple of cinematic exotica, but not usually in a sub-genre as disreputable as this.

Here she plays Susan Stevenson, who travels into the New Guinea jungle in search of her missing ethnologist husband. Inevitably she and her team are captured by cannibals, who worship the decomposing remains of her husband as some kind of totem . . . This is basically a lacklustre jungle adventure with a few cannibal elements thrown in. Apart from the usual animal cruelty, the film features a graphic castration scene (cut from most prints, but turning up as one of the many 'borrowings' in *Eaten Alive*), a particularly malevolent dwarf cannibal, and the rather striking image of a geiger counter ticking away in the ethnologist's slimy, decomposing cadaver. The only scene which delivers any real frisson is where Susan, who also seems to be regarded as some sort of deity by the tribe, is stripped naked and anointed with the grue which is now all that remains of her husband. Otherwise, the direction is more inspired than D'Amato's but not interesting enough to raise the film above the level of routine. Sergio Martino also made *The Great Alligator* (1979), in which a giant alligator threatens an African tourist resort *à la Java*. But although the film does feature angry local tribes who have been displaced by the arrival of 'civilisation', there are no actual cannibals.

These exist a-plenty in *Cannibal Holocaust*, undoubtedly the most disturbing and impressive film in the entire cycle. As mentioned at the start of the first article, this was one of the films responsible for starting the 'video nasty' moral panic in the UK, although in fact the video released by Go Video was not absolutely complete. However, the bulk of the atrocity footage is there.

## SUFFERING FOR ART

The story begins with anthropologist Professor Harold Munro of New York University being dispatched by the University and the Pan American Television Network to the Amazon jungle in search of a missing documentary crew comprising Alan Yates, Faye Daniels, Jack Anders and Mark Damazzo. Arriving in the territory of the Tree People, Munro finds them both aggressive and fearful but eventually he and his party manage to gain their confidence. They then discover a gruesome 'totem' constructed from the remains of the film crew and their equipment. This includes cans of



film, which they take home and develop. These reveal that the 'documentary' crew had systematically terrorised the tribespeople, including raping and murdering them, in order to film atrocity footage which they could then present as showing a conflict between the Tree People and the Swamp People. In the end, the tribespeople turn on their tormentors and extract a hideous revenge which the filmmakers, true 'professionals' to the end, manage to capture for posterity in all its revolting detail.

On one level, *Cannibal Holocaust* is a savage critique of the whole Mondo school of filmmaking. At one point Munro is shown extracts from one of the team's earlier efforts, *The Last Road to Hell*, a montage of African atrocity footage and clearly a reference to *Africa Addio*. 'Everything you saw was a put-on,' claims a TV executive proudly, adding 'and the ratings they got were fantastic'. However, as the footage which Munro brings back shows, the film crew's methods go well beyond faking real events and involve making things happen for the camera to film. These include killing and cutting up a turtle, and setting fire to a whole village. In the latter scene the film crew advance into the village like an invading army—the parallel with *My Lai*, a real-life Vietnam community which was decimated by an American commando unit—is writ large.

No event, however horrible, is left to go to waste unrecorded. When their guide is bitten on the foot by a snake, the ensuing amputation and cauterisation are captured in loving detail—followed by his death and crude burial. Or the scene of what they call 'primitive social surgery', in which a heavily pregnant woman is forced to give birth and then murdered, whilst the foetus is buried in mud. Even their own deaths, which involve the castration of Jack, the multiple rape of Faye, and the disembowelling and devouring of all of them, are captured in unflinching detail.

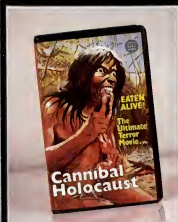
The Tree People (above), the victim (top right) and the meal (centre right)—documentary realism mixes with atrocity footage in *Cannibal Holocaust*, one of the films responsible for starting the 'video nasty' moral panic in the UK. It was proceeded against by the DPP in 1982

Here Deodato's documentary style really comes into its own with quite alarming verisimilitude, further helped by the clever use of blank leader, lab marks and all the other familiar paraphernalia of the cutting room.

## WHO ARE THE SAVAGES?

*Cannibal Holocaust*, then, presents itself as a devastating critique of media sensationalism, and in particular an attack on Mondo-style 'documentary' filmmaking. At one point in the film Munro asks 'do you ever think that from the tribespeople's point of view we might be the ones who are the savages?' and at the end he muses 'I wonder who the real cannibals are'. However, it has to be admitted that, in spite of the film's remarkable technical qualities, and in spite of Martin Baker's stirring defence of it in his book *The Video Nasties*, *Cannibal Holocaust* is a film which wants to have its cake and eat it. As the *Aurum Film Encyclopedia of Horror* neatly puts it: 'the film pretends to condemn what it exploits: the pseudo American filmmakers are presented as the villains who shouldn't have filmed the very images which the Italian Deodato and others offer for sale. In view of the movie's pretend realism, it is worth noting that Deodato used to be Roberto Rossellini's assistant'. The correctness of this harsh judgement is underlined by the fact that one of the most unpleasant scenes in the film—an unbelievably savage punishment for adultery—occurs during Munro's journey to meet the Tree People, that is, long after the offending film team has

**"The only scene which delivers any real frisson is where Susan . . . is stripped naked and anointed with the grue which is now all that remains of her husband"**



been despatched to oblivion and when the only cameras present to 'record' this disturbing event are in fact Diodato's own.

After *Cannibal Holocaust*, however, everything else has the quality of a pale imitation. Lenzi's *Eaten Alive* includes footage from *Deep River Savages*, *Prisoner of the Cannibal God* and *Cannibal Holocaust*, whilst *Zombie Holocaust* (Marino Girolami, 1980) throws in everything but the kitchen sink in order to revitalise a by now over-formulaic (to put it mildly) cycle. Mad doctors, zombies and cannibals all meet up in a crazy melting pot which in the States, where it was released as *Dr Butcher MD*, seems to have attracted quite a cult following. Gruesome it certainly is - a zombie's head is churned up by the propeller blades of an outboard motor, eyeballs are scooped out, throats slit, and there's even major brain surgery

without anaesthetic! Similarly all inclusive (but executed with less zest) is *Cannibal Ferox* (Umberto Lenzi, 1981), which is really the last major entry in the Third World cannibal movie stakes. In the States the advertising campaign for the film trumpeted that it had been banned in thirty-one countries, and promised twenty-four acts of 'barbaric, sadistic torture graphically shown'. This really says it all, however, for the film is just that - an efficient but dull and uninvolved catalogue of cruelties which includes a woman being hung up by her breasts, a man

Actual cruelty to animals makes faked cruelty to humans seem more 'realistic', as in *Cannibal Attack* (below)



being castrated and having his penis eaten in front of him, and then having the top of his head lopped off and his brains scooped out. There's even a hypocritical anti-racist message à la *Cannibal Holocaust*, except here it's even more threadbare. As Bisette says, the film is 'a diatribe against the racist belief in cannibalism that revels in the spectacle of Third World cannibals dispatching Caucasians'.

## ARTISTIC LICENCE

Whilst, in the UK at least, the cannibal cycle has now, thanks to rigid censorship, become once again almost completely invisible, elements of it crop up in various forms in 'respectable' films as diverse as *Apocalypse Now*, *The Emerald Forest*, *Quest For Fire* and *Farwell to the King*. And Peter Greenaway's latest film, *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, contains scenes which, had they occurred in the context of a Third World cannibal film as opposed to the work of an art house 'auteur', would certainly have earned the work an outright ban.

For some horror buffs with a 'train spotting' mentality these films notch up a high score simply as gore fests. For others, they've got 'radical' overtones simply because they so relentlessly and remorselessly transgress so many taboos, revelling unashamedly in excess of every kind. For others still, the present writer included, any possible redeeming qualities of this kind are decisively negated by the films' brutally crude social Darwinism and their portrayal of Third World peoples, all the more appalling for being dressed up in hypocritically 'anti-racist' terms in certain cases. It seems to me no coincidence that the films which make up the cannibal cycle are set in precisely those jungles, like those of the Amazon Basin for instance, which are now most under threat from modern farming methods, and from which indigenous peoples are now being driven, often by brute force (cf Mario Giarizzo's *White Slave! Amazonia*, a not uninteresting

**"It seems to me no coincidence that the films which make up the cannibal cycle are set in precisely those jungles... from which indigenous peoples are now being driven"**

female version of *Deep River Savages* crossed with *The Emerald Forest*). Is it too fanciful to suggest that the real message of the films discussed in these articles is that the inhabitants of these last wildernesses just aren't worth saving?

With thanks to Alan Jones, Stefan Jaworzyn, Mark Kermode, Kim Newman and Steve Rowe.



# THE STRIEBER ENIGMA

**O**ctober 4, 1985, Writer Whitley Strieber is apparently abducted by intelligent, non-human visitors. December 26, 1985, Strieber has a dream in which he is offered testimony that we are not alone. Weeks later he discovers that members of his family have had identical dreams. Months later he makes the most shocking discovery of his life...

March 1, 1986. It wasn't a dream...

Strieber's attempt to deal with this shattering assault from the unknown translated into an international bestseller. Now *Communion* is a major motion picture, starring Christopher Walken as Whitley and Lindsay Crouse as his wife, Anne.

It's hard to imagine how a film with all the makings of a gripping SF/fantasy adventure epic could be based on a true story, but that's *Communion*. It delves into the drama of a family caught in a living nightmare and traces Strieber's self doubts, following him as he seeks medical help and then investigates psychological explanations for the phenomenon.

Predictably it was not an easy film to make. One man's dream can be another man's nightmare, and that other man was Philippe Mora. 'Yes, *Communion* was an incredibly difficult film to make,' the Australian director admits. 'The film is closest to a psychological thriller, or a mystery. And I think the constraints on it, because it was based on a true story about real people, were enormous. Obviously, the urge was to goose it up a bit and make it more of a conventional entertainment, but I just had to restrain that urge.'

'The main problem for me as a filmmaker was that the story had no ending. Audiences are used to Act One, Act Two, Act Three, but this has no conclusion. This is a 'What-do-you-think?' which is, unfortunately, going to leave a lot of people in the mainstream audience just dangling there, unhappy. But there was no way around it, because there was no answer.'

'*Communion* is such a fascinating story because it is

**Weird dreams, interdimensional experiences or madness? Those were the options reviewed by author Whitley Strieber in *Communion* and *Transformation*, two books dealing with his own encounters with alien life forces. Juanita Elefante-Gordon talks to director Philippe Mora who has the awesome task of bringing Strieber's extraterrestrial visitations to the big screen.**



**"We don't know whether Whitley had a psychological trauma, or whether he was visited by aliens, or some combination of both..."**

the first time someone as articulate as Whitley has had these experiences. We don't know whether Whitley had a psychological trauma, or whether he was visited by aliens, or some combination of both. That was the biggest difficulty in adapting the story because it's open-ended. It would have been neat and tidy to have one or the other. I know in commercial terms that would have satisfied the audience.'

## FREAKED OUT

Mora is still digesting the experience of making *Communion*. 'I consulted with Whitley quite a bit as we were making the movie. It was such a surrealistic experience that had occurred to him that the whole thing was very complicated.'

'It was quite freaky having Whitley around. Not that we had any differences or anything like that, as much as he sort of

freaked out when we started. He got very disturbed by seeing these things coming to life on the screen, but after he got over that, it was fine.'

Heated debate over Strieber's alien encounters continues but the tumult of controversy effected by the film's release is double that generated by the book launch. Both Strieber and Mora are amazed. 'I think as soon as you say something is based on a true story, a story as outrageous as this, it's going to cause some controversy. But the controversy is sort of overblown. A key element of both the book and the film is Whitley's own scepticism about his experience. He really didn't know whether it had happened to him or not, he just said it was an incredibly intense experience. The only way that he could find a satisfactory explanation in his own mind, was that the beings are in some way real. Whether it is a physical or psychological reality, it's just amazing that it happens on this scale. It's almost like a religious experience for atheists.'

'We got a lot of comments from people. They liked the film a lot and some of them who had similar experiences were disturbed by it because it brought back memories, sometimes unpleasant memories.'

'Another interesting reaction is, people who never thought they'd had any experiences said that this triggered something in them that reminded them of things from childhood. But then, you never know. Some people are just more susceptible to suggestion than others. And some want to believe that there is more to life than this, and one of the ways in which that is manifested is in these stories of extraterrestrials.'

'Depicting the aliens was a very complicated and subtle problem as well because Whitley always felt that what he was seeing was not the aliens.

As seen in the film, they appear just as Whitley remembers them, looking not quite real and somehow mask-like. He always thought they were kind of puppets or fake in some way, which was a very difficult point to get across in a movie because it's so literal.'

'I tried to get that across by showing some scenes where you see that they are masks... where one alien's face is pulled off. And there's a scene with Christopher Walken sitting next to a blue head removed from the body. I thought it was very clear that these aliens, these manifestations, were not what they really were. Though some reviewers took it very literally and said, 'Oh, they looked fake!', which is exactly the point. It's a subtle point, maybe too subtle for a mainstream movie.'

## A BREED APART

Whose idea was it to cast Christopher Walken as Strieber's celluloid counterpart? 'It was basically my choice', says Mora without hesitation. 'I've always thought he was a terrific actor, but he was perfect for this because I felt he could portray a writer, which I think is a difficult thing for an actor to portray on the screen because writers don't actually do anything on screen. It's not like a plumber or a cowboy or something—it's all cerebral. I felt that Chris could really show that something was going on behind the eyes. He's got an off-beat quality which I think just fitted this. After all, it is a story about someone who thinks they are going crazy, and I thought that Christopher could really get that across.'

Although the director's relationship with the writer dates back to the Sixties when both were living in London, Mora painting and Strieber studying at the London School of Film, he did not draw on this to shape the Strieber film persona. 'It's an interpretation of his character. I wanted him to match the real Whitley only in spirit, I didn't want to try and make it a facsimile. For example, Whitley is a Texan, Christopher played Whitley as a New Yorker.'

Born in Paris and raised in Melbourne, Philippe Mora began his film career at the age of eighteen when he launched the highly regarded trade



Christopher Walken in *Communion* (top); with Lindsay Crouse as Anne Strieber (above); the real Whitley Strieber (facing page photo: Greenfield-Sanders) presided over the making of the film

publication *Cinema Papers*. In the late Sixties he moved to London to pursue painting and filmmaking, and consequently wrote and directed his first film, *Trouble in Metropolis*. He followed this with *Swastika and Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?* and two award-winning documentaries which he wrote and directed.

Mora describes his taste in directors as 'pretty sort of academic', citing Jean Cocteau, Kubrick's early work and surrealist directors Fellini and Browning. 'I think Tod Browning's *Freaks* is an

incredible picture. And I particularly like Buster Keaton. I think the feature films he directed are fantastic.'

In 1976 Mora returned to his homeland, and with a film he directed called *Mad Dog Moran* starring Dennis Hopper, started the New Wave in Australia. This was the first Australian film to receive wide American release thus bringing him to the attention of American film executives in Tinseltown. In 1978 Mora relocated to Hollywood, directing one feature a year. 'The first film I did here in Hollywood was a horror film for United Artists called *The Beast Within* about a seventeen-year-old kid who turns into an insect. The reason I was offered the job was that the studio couldn't believe that *Mad Dog Moran* had been made

for so little money. I wanted to work in America so I took the job, it was the craziest script I ever read! I changed it a bit - I usually do as I'm directing.'

Other Mora films include *The Return of Captain Invincible* with Alan Arkin, *A Breed Apart* with Rutger Hauer and Kathleen Turner, *Howling 2* and *3*, and the taut political thriller *Death of a Soldier* with James Coburn. 'The last film I wrote completely was *The Howling 3: The Marsupials*, which was a send-up of horror movies. I think it's terribly funny, but I would. I'm interested in the idea of horror comedy. I would like to do something else in that area or come up with something.'

## COVER-UP

In the meantime, Mora is gearing up to direct another film based on a Strieber bestseller, *Majestic*.

'*Majestic* won't be as tough because it's fiction and there's so much more latitude. One isn't faced with recreating characters who are actually living and staring at you. It's really just a thriller with a fictional narrative. The logistics of it would be as complicated as any other kind of picture dealing with special effects and things, but the subtleties aren't as awesome.'

While *Communion* had a budget of \$5 million, *Majestic* will cost at least \$15 million. The story is based on a real life

incident which took place in New Mexico in 1947 when the military put out a press release stating they had captured a flying saucer that had crashed-landed. However the very next day they retracted their statement, claiming what they had found were the remains of a meteorological balloon.

'I found this story fascinating because this incident is the origin of all the stories of government cover-ups of

**"The first film I did in Hollywood was a horror film called *The Beast Within* about a seventeen-year-old kid who turns into an insect"**

UFOs. I think the whole UFO issue and sightings of UFOs are terribly fascinating.'

Does Mora believe there is other life out there in the universe? 'I don't know if there is or not. I'm a Hollywood director and a certain amount of scepticism goes with the job. But... yeah... I think there probably is.'



**H**ave your trips to America changed your view of that country?  
JGB: No, they've

completely confirmed it. The formulas of American life were manifest in the Far East where I was brought up, so the American style of life – the cars, the consumer goods – was something I knew in my childhood. When I went to Canada in the mid-Fifties I saw it all again: Canada and the States were virtually indistinguishable. The one moment of surprise I had was when I arrived for the first time in Los Angeles in December, a few days before the Spielberg premiere [of *Empire of the Sun*].

Like much of America, we're so familiar with it from the movies and TV and magazines. The Americans have a British Travel Authority view of England – all beefeaters, dry stone walls and half-timbered cottages – they get their image of England from British Airways ads and from the Ealing comedies, the stereotypes of the English cinema, which feed this

**"The Americans have a British Travel Authority view of England – all beefeaters, dry stone walls and half-timbered cottages"**

completely erroneous picture. But our picture of the States is remarkably accurate. Los Angeles

is like *The Rockford Files*. A bit tackier – but the cumulative image that you get of, say, New York or Los Angeles from hundreds of TV episodes of *Kojack*, and all those films, is accurate. The one surprise was, I arrived in Los Angeles and was picked up in this limo. Sailing down Santa Monica Boulevard on the way to the Beverly Hilton Hotel, I was looking out at this landscape and thinking, 'This is just what I expected, it's like *The Rockford Files*', and then I thought, 'Wait a minute – there's something wrong here'. I looked up and there was this gigantic hoarding about the size of two tennis courts with *Empire of the Sun* and Steven Spielberg and my name in the same size letters! I was amazed. I thought, 'Good God, this is the one unexpected element'. I sailed along, and a couple of miles



J G Ballard (photo: David Tate)

further on there was another of these things. They were all over the Beverly Hills and Hollywood skyline. I got into the hotel, switched on the TV and out came the *Empire of the Sun* commercial. Opened a newspaper: full page advertisements for the film. It was like one of those Hollywood monster movies of the Fifties where some creature has escaped and is clambering over the rooftops of the city. In this case it was the movie based on my book – my own book broken loose from inside my head and scrambling over Beverly Hills!

As a writer with a keen eye for everything that was going on, the ironies were not lost on me that I should myself (or at least my book) be at the centre of this media tidal wave that Spielberg propelled across the Western world. It was interesting to see it all going on from a privileged vantage point. None of this would have taken place had it been some film by a minor European director.

**HUNGERFORD**

Are you happy with the book, *Memories of the Space Age*, now that you've seen it?

It's a handsome looking book. I haven't tried to read the stories – I haven't read any since I wrote them. James Turner of Arkham House has done a very nice job; it was a pleasure to deal with him. I like the design of the book very much, and the interior illustrations are remarkably good.

The artist they picked, J K Potter, is absolutely brilliant. I think those illustrations repay looking at again and again, they're amazingly rich. I don't know how the stories stand up to anybody reading them nose-to-tail as a collection. There are bound to be repetitions, and they were written across such a spread of time there must be stylistic differences. But I hope they hang together.

The narrator of your novella, *Running Wild*, also made an appearance in your collected short story, *The Object of the Attack*.

I may use him again as my psychiatric investigator, my Maigret. I've written stories like *The Object of the Attack* and *Running Wild* before. A lot of my psychological fiction lies in that area – *The Consat Angels*, *The Lost Leonardo*. I've written quite a few stories where there's an investigation into some

mysterious event. But I've had very little time over the last year to do much writing. The Hungerford massacre was mentioned in a review of *Running Wild* in *The Times*. I suppose Hungerford was what put the idea in my head. These inexplicable killings are extraordinary events. Not that the children of my Pangbourne

**"It was like one of those Hollywood monster movies of the Fifties where some creature has escaped and is clambering over the rooftops of the city"**

village are a group of Michael Ryans (I don't know anything about Michael Ryan). When I was in Los Angeles in December, Kathy Kennedy, Spielberg's partner, asked me what I was working on and I mentioned that I was about to start writing *Running Wild*. She was very interested and keen to take an option out on it, but I think it's slightly too strong a

# MEMOIRS FOR A SPACE AGE

## PART TWO: HELLO AMERICA

David Pringle continues his in depth discussion  
with the world famous author J G Ballard.

dish for Spielberg. One of those John Carpenter directors might have fun with it.

### IN GERE

Has anything happened towards filming *The Day of Creation*?

There's been some interest, but the problem is that it would be a large budget movie. Spielberg said to me when I saw him in London that *Empire of the Sun* may well be one of the last of that kind – there's a general feeling that films have to get cheaper, because there's so much riding on them financially they can't afford to take risks. *Day of Creation* would be immensely expensive; they'd have to transport a complete film unit. Even if it was some little backwater of the Mississippi, or somewhere down in Mexico, it would cost a fortune.

But one can never tell when some producer or director is going to be interested. Richard Gere, the actor, has taken an option on *The Unlimited Dream Company* with a view to playing the hero himself. I met him in London and was very impressed by him – highly articulate, thoughtful, serious-

minded. He's very interested in Buddhism, does work on behalf of various Buddhist relief missions. Reincarnation, through one species to another, is very much a part of Buddhist thought, and obviously that is what intrigued him about the novel. What would have been the insuperable obstacle of filming the flying sequences is no problem these days – they can do that extremely convincingly. But one must assume, to be sensible, that nothing will come of it. Most of my stuff has been optioned and re-optioned. Where is *Concrete Island* at this moment? That has just been optioned from Australia. Now it's a long time since that was written, and it has been continuously optioned ever since it was published, but nobody has ever got it together. And that would be quite easy and cheap to film. The film world is a mysterious business. A lot depends on the sudden enthusiasm of someone. A man called Bruce Robinson, who was the scriptwriter of *The Killing Fields*, has written the script for *High-Rise* which he plans to direct himself – but it could take years.

Recollected in tranquillity, do you have any misgivings about

the production and promotion of *Empire of the Sun*?

No. I was involved, but I was purely a spectator. I wrote the novel, of course, but the film has no contribution from me in it. It was Spielberg's film, and the publicity campaigns that were mounted in Europe and the States and around the world were generated by Warners' publicity machine. It was fascinating to observe. It was very professionally done. That was one pleasing thing; there was no attempt to sensationalise the subject matter.

If the book had been written and filmed in, say, the 1950s there would have been much more of a tendency to go for the *Camp on Blood Island* sort of thing. The national stereotypes – the wily, sadistic Japanese on the one hand, and the heroic British and Americans on the other – are still strong, but now people understand the relativity of these things... they have a more sophisticated eye and tempers have cooled. Also, in Spielberg himself there was an extremely thoughtful and intelligent man who had no intention of sensationalising the subject matter. This came through in Warners'

presentation of the film: it was presented as a serious movie.

In many ways it's an art movie, disguised as an epic. It has an epic look to it, but inside is this sensitive study of a child's evolving mind in the eye of the hurricane of war – which is similar to the sort of sensitive psychological study you see in a film like *The Four Hundred Blows*, Truffaut's movie. The whole experience has been very interesting. And of course it's been doubly interesting for me because, unlike other novels of mine, this was close to me in autobiographical terms.

The post-Spielberg paperback of *Empire of the Sun* sold about half a million copies in the States. I had a vast quantity of mail, and it's still coming. Letters from people who say they saw the film and were overwhelmed, or that they read the book and were deeply impressed. A lot of children have written to me, ten year olds and eleven year olds. They say they've read the book, but I imagine they've just seen the film. People send me old newspapers they've found in the attic, and reminiscences of their parents and grandparents – hundreds of letters, literally. I got a couple today, including a card from some child who'd discovered my birthday. It's very touching. Americans are immensely generous and warm people. It wasn't just the film.

Oddly enough, the film didn't do all that well in the States – it did far better in Europe. But what was shown in the States was the TV

**"In many ways,  
*Empire of the Sun*  
is an art movie,  
disguised as an  
epic"**

programme called *The Making of Empire of the Sun*. Here it was on at 11 o'clock at night, but there it was shown on one of the major networks. That generated a huge amount of interest, because it was much more directly biographical than the film. It was full of newsreels, interviews with myself and one or two other people; much more of an historical document. That's all thanks to Steven Spielberg, of course, it wouldn't have happened otherwise. It was quite amazing. The whole thing was extraordinary, owing to the magic of Spielberg's name.



# OVER HOT COLES

The sword and sorcery genre gave Adrian Cole his start as a published author with *The Dream Lords*. But children's fantasies, such as *Moorstones*, *The Omara* series and, most recently, the *Star Requiem* have tempted him to cross the fields of science fiction, fantasy and horror. As he tells John Gilbert, just one genre ain't big enough for him.



Initially, Adrian Cole chose the sword and sorcery field for his writer's apprenticeship, creating tales of unrelenting action in the *Conan* and *Krull* moulds. However, as so many other authors in the early Eighties discovered, the market for bared steel and rippling muscles was too restrictive.

Cole slowly brought his other interests into play and started to create stories that would grab a wider audience. 'I'm equally as fond of horrors as I am of fantasy and science fiction. I like the fusion of genres as I like the fusion of technology. Like *Star Requiem* of the recent series, you'll find as you go into the series I've created my own biology. There're elements of cyberpunk in there as well and possibly a few elements of heavy metal.'

What does he think of the argument that you can't combine science fiction and fantasy? 'I can't agree with that: it is a narrow view. Yes, some books are pure science fiction for obvious reasons, some books might be more sword and sorcery, what have you. But I think that fantasy will get itself trapped in a rut if it doesn't open out, if it doesn't explore the wider avenues, and crossovers seem to me to be a pretty good way of doing it.'

The crossover also enables Cole to play with high tech science fiction concepts despite a lack of technical background. 'I like taking hard science but

playing around with it. A scientist would probably analyse some of my imaginings and say, 'Well it isn't really technically possible'. Well, I'd find another way to deal with that. I don't look to the actual nuts and bolts of the various things I create, I leave that to the reader.'

## POWER GAMES

It is a similar technique to the one used by horror writers who suggest, rather than show, gore. 'That can be a very effective way of achieving horror, and some of the best

**"I think there are times when you have to go the whole hog and be very graphic and I wouldn't shy away from doing that"**

horror writers today do that: people like TED Klein, even Dan Simmons in *Song of Kali*; it was the understatement in the book that made it so shocking.'

And yet, unlike many of his SF colleagues, Cole is no prude. 'I think there are times when you have to go the whole hog and be very graphic and I wouldn't shy away from doing that. But it depends how effective it's going to be within that particular work.'

Is there a particular reaction, horror or awe for instance, that he would like to elicit from his general readership? A message,

perhaps? 'One of the things that I toy around with is power – the use and abuse of power – which fascinates me, whether it's political power, or religious power, or sexual power, the power of one person over another. Those elements come out quite strongly.'

'I think, essentially, that my books are written as adventure yarns, as entertainment, but I'm trying to develop character and equate the everyday problems we find and underline some of them. I don't sit down and think, 'I'm going to expose this or that,' but as a writer you can't help tapping into the vein of your experiences. Sometimes you go back and look at things you've written and realise you were saying more than you realised at the time you were doing it.'

## HUMOUR ME

At the other end of the scale, Cole enjoys writing humorous fantasy. His British Fantasy Convention reading of *The Vulgariad* (a mock fantasy novel premise which will appear in *FEAR* soon) had delegates in stitches, and he aims to incorporate laughs into future works. 'I have plans to write a humorous novel, and it's sprung out of *The Vulgariad*.'

'The idea is that you've got three authors who are friends of each other who inadvertently bring into our world their creations, one of which is a sword and sorcery type of barbarian. They are then responsible for looking after him. He's behaving as he would

do if he was Conan in Cimmeria, and they have to cope with that in our world.'

'I've also got it in mind to write a horror novel which would be in a contemporary setting. The horror would be the main element of the novel, perhaps with elements of fantasy in there, just as the humorous novel would be sword and sorcery with a difference, but a contemporary one with perhaps a shade of science fiction thrown in as well.'

Firstly, however, he has other unpublished books on his word processor at home in the West

**"I don't look to the actual nuts and bolts of the various things I create, I leave that to the reader"**

Country, and the final chapters of his *Star Requiem* series must see print. 'I'm writing the last volume, and then there are three ideas that I've got to decide between. One is the humorous novel, which I think will be a bit of light relief. I've also had strong encouragement from a number of quarters to write a horror novel. And then there is a fantasy novel which will be a one off rather than a series and I've got some interesting, possibly hair-raising ideas to go in there. Again, it's very much a fusion, even more of a fusion than *Star Requiem*.'

# MASSACRED!!

**FEAR's US correspondent Philip Nutman reports on the latest from Lynch, downs drinks with David Schow and takes a seat near the exit sign for the new Leatherface movie, TCM3.**

**DATELINE: New York City, January 1990**

If you think *Eraserhead* director David Lynch is weird, then watch out for his daughter, about to make her directorial debut this year with a feature entitled *Boxing Helena*.

Don't, of course, be misled by the title; the movie is not about a girl with a passion for pugilism. It is, according to 21 year old Jennifer Lynch, 'an obsessive modern-day love story'. Fine – or as daddy David often says, 'Peachy keen' – but then that could be a description of *Blue Velvet*. In fact, *Boxing Helena* makes that film sound like a Disney movie. It's the tender tale of a girl whose boyfriend cuts off her arms and legs and keeps her in a box. Now there's devotion for you...

Actually, he was quite offended by the subject matter, Jennifer commented in *The New York Times* magazine concerning David's reaction to her first screenplay, adding, 'but he thinks I've written a hell of a script.'

*Boxing Helena* won't appear on our screens until 1991, but in the meantime we have not one but two new David Lynch films due this year. First up and now available at your local video store is *Twin Peaks*, the pilot episode of a TV series for ABC, co-written by Lynch with Mark Frost. Then there's *Wild at Heart*, a feature starring Nicholas Cage and Laura Dern

as a pair of lovers on the run, with Willem Dafoe as Bobby Peru – 'a dark angel', according to the director – who dogs their movements. The movie is based on the book by Barry Gifford, but in true Lynch fashion departs drastically from its source material and probes areas of sexual obsession blacker than those explored in *Blue Velvet*.

'I thought they would look me up,' the director admitted to journalist Richard B Woodward in his profile for *The NY Times*, as he discussed a controversial torture scene in the new picture involving masturbation, a gun and a pair of soda bottles. What exactly this has to do with anything, Lynch refuses to explain, giving his usual I-don't-know-where-these-ideas-come-from line in defence of the accusation that he is an intellectual exploiter of taboo imagery à la Peter Greenaway. One thing is certain though – the scene certainly isn't in Gifford's novel.

Whilst the big screen allows Lynch the freedom publicly to exorcise his own hothouse obsessions, TV on the other hand has imposed a set of strictures on the man who was once described as 'a psychopathic version of Norman Rockwell'. There is no explicit sex or violence in *Twin Peaks*, but plenty of weirdness and eccentricity. The film is a surreal combination of a detective story and a soap opera and stars Lynch fave Kyle

McLachlan as an FBI agent investigating the murder of a high school teen queen in a small lumber town. Drugs, skin magazines and bondage connect with the murder, and the cast of characters includes two budding adolescent sociopaths, a woman who carries a log around, and a policeman who cries at crime scenes. Once again, American cinema's most unpredictable moviemaker subverts suburban values, but how will the public at large receive this otherworldly vision of all they know and love? 'We did a cable test that was pretty positive,' said Gary S Levine, vice president for dramatic series development at ABC, in the recent *Times* feature, 'not overwhelming, but positive'. Network execs, however, are displaying faith in the project and *Twin Peaks* will appear in a prime time slot later this year. Rumour has it that the BBC have already picked up British rights for the show.

## WORKS IN PROGRESS – DAVID J SCHOW

'Seeing Red, my first anthology, just came out from Tor Books, and it has a wonderful cover by artist Thomas Canty depicting the character of Asteroth from *Der Golem*,' beams author David Schow over afternoon drinks in a Park Avenue South bar on a cold, grey Monday afternoon.

'Seeing Red collects together ten years of short fiction, including three new works – *Incident on a Rainy Night in Beverly Hills*, *Night Bloomer* and *Not From Around Here*. *Night Bloomer* will also be appearing in the Dave Schow issue of *Weird Tales*, due out in late January/early February. Pulphouse just bought *Not From Around Here* for reprint, and Fantasy Tales have bought the *Graffiti* story and *Night Bloomer* for Britain, so there's a lot happening right now,' he adds with understatement. Los Angeles resident Schow, who recently penned *Leatherface: Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3*, has started the 1990s with quite a bang. Over to you, Dave...

'Well, next up is *Lost Angels*, a novella collection due from New American Library in March. That one collects four works plus *Red Light*, the story that won the World Fantasy Award a couple of years back, because it's in the same vein, and of those novellas one is

new, a tale entitled *Monster Movies*, which is also going to appear in *Weird Tales*. Also appearing in that issue is the short story version of *The Shaft*, which is my next novel and is due out in Britain at the end of the year. I'm real glad that found a home at last. What's particularly nice about that one is it doesn't give away the book. It has some events in common with the novel but, in a way, its plot trajectory covers most of the narrative.'

Schow pauses for breath and a mouthful of beer. If you're sitting there saying 'Dave who?' then you've not been reading this column since Issue 1. Schow is one of the brightest talents around right now and the smart money is on him becoming one of the major genre authors of the 1990s.



David J Schow

Those of you not familiar with his work should obtain a copy of *The Kill Riff* (now available from Futura in hardback) or *Seeing Red* from your local specialist shop.

'When asked about *The Shaft*, Schow blanches. 'Oh no, not a what-is-the-book-about question,' he says with a smile. 'The Kill Riff was the rock 'n' roll novel, *The Shaft* is the sex & drugs book. And now I've nothing left to write about. It's a horror novel in that it has supernatural things occurring in it, not the least of which is an apartment building with Alzheimer's disease that's addicted to cocaine (!!!) and human blood.'

Er, right, Dave. The author laughs. 'It's complicated to explain what I

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mean by that without having the book in front of me – but it's not a sentient building story. The interior workings of the building determine certain turns of the plot in terms of its architecture. It's built from the remnants of destroyed buildings and the story deals with the idea that there are some things that should just die when they are past their time instead of being recycled. To another end, it has a life form residing in one of the air shafts and this thing and the building have a parasitical relationship. This ties in to the fact that all the characters in the book are victims of different types of addictive behaviour, be it bad relationships, substance abuse, power tripping, or coffee or whatever. Basically, it's a story about drug dealers and prostitutes, people who are running from their own realities.

Advance word on the novel is good and several publications have already scheduled extracts to appear in the coming months. Although he's clearly pleased with the book, Schow admits it was a difficult work to orchestrate. 'It took forever to write,' he reveals. 'It was meant to be a quickie and I originally had a due date but that went out the window real fast. It was something like two years after that I finally finished it. *The Shift* was excruciating to write because it's such a bleak book and when you have to crawl inside that environment to steep yourself in the mood you want to convey it becomes highly oppressive. This book is peopled with fucked-up lives and that's tough to live with for any length of time, so I had periodically to leave it to work on other things just so I didn't get depressed.'

You have been warned.

## EXCLUSIVE – CHAINSAW 3

Even the dumbest moviegoer wouldn't fall for *Leatherface* ad tag line – 'The Most Controversial Horror Movie of All Time is Finally Here!' – and advance word from industry insiders was not encouraging. The script had been substantially rewritten (nothing new in this business, but all the good stuff was out, replaced by stupid dialogue and unoriginal 'suspense' sequences) and certain portions of the picture were reshot, not once but twice. Then, to add insult to injury, the MPAA repeatedly slapped an X rating on the flick, rejecting it four times and countering two appeals by producers New Line Cinema. There was, a source revealed, little gore, little horror, and little to recommend

full stop. I went into the movie theatre with minimal expectations – which were sadly fulfilled.

Let's be brutally honest: *Leatherface* is an irredeemably dumb, pointless movie, a horror flick made by a director who displays no real feel for the genre, and above all else, a movie made for those people who have never seen either *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* or its underrated sequel – in fact it's a movie made for people who've not seen a horror film since 1972.



In all fairness though, the picture does start promisingly, its first half hour filled with a genuine sense of approaching dread as inevitable as the opening slow motion shot of a sledgehammer slamming into the face of a woman (off screen), an unrelentingly brutal image aided by implication rather than explicitness, which is to director Jeff (The Stepfather 2) Burr's credit. The first section of the movie takes place in broad daylight on the open road yet there is an intense sense of claustrophobia, of darkness about to fall.

Ryan (Bill Butler) and Michelle (Kate Hodge) are driving her dad's Mercedes from California. As they cross the border into Texas, news reports alert them to a massive traffic jam up ahead, caused by the discovery of a huge toxic body pit. Ryan, being a bit of a smartass and a medical student to boot, explains why it's toxic and what happens to the human body when it decays. Surrounded by the harsh desert landscape, this gives Michelle

little comfort. It also tightens the screws on the audience. Yep, SOMETHING BAD is going to happen . . .

Ryan and Michelle narrowly escape a shotgun death at the hands of Alfredo, a scumball gas station attendant, but are saved by the intervention of Tex (well played by Viggo Mortensen). Afraid that Alfredo will follow, Michelle takes a

that screams SEQUEL!!! in neon letters.

I sincerely hope there won't be one, for there is nothing original here, nothing startling, nothing of any real merit, aside from some halfway decent performances. Die hard fans will be deeply disappointed and mainstream viewers bored. Of course, the producers will blame the director who in turn will blame the screenwriter, but it's not Dave Schow's fault: having read the first two drafts of the script – the ones penned – I can accurately state that only 20% of his material reached the screen.

The answer for the film's failure lies in a statement made by Jeff Burr in an interview with Bill Warren: 'My original take was to make our film more like the first movie . . . ' To all intents and purposes, TCM3 is a remake of Hooper's groundbreaking picture, but a pale imitation at best.

Those of you bemoaning the fact the film is unlikely to ever be shown in Britain should take heart; you're not missing a thing. *Leatherface* belongs in a celluloid body pit.



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BUT THEIR SOULS

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detour off the highway, tearing down a backroads route recommended by Tex. The road leads them into a head-on confrontation with a cannibal family (a new one in no way connected to the original clanin Tobe Hooper's masterpiece), and a car crash that links them up with Benny (*Dawn of the Dead*'s Ken Forsee), a weekend warrior off to play survivalist games in the mountains. By this point, the promise of the set-up is blown, the mood shattered by cliché after cliché, inane dialogue (Ryan: 'This is not happening! I'm about to lose my mind!'), and too much wandering around in the dark. Here the movie appears to expand its running time from 85 minutes to 180, prompting the viewer to fidget and consult his/her watch. The question is not Will they survive? it's When-can-I-get-out-of-here? Even the action in the last third appears slow, predictable, resulting in a weak payoff and, even worse, a ridiculous tacked-on happy ending (shot by the editor a month before the film opened)



# HARDWARE: ALL TOOLED UP



Science fiction super-shocker **Hardware** is now well into postproduction after a hectic, special effects filled shoot in London and Morocco. John Gilbert takes a sneak preview.

The £800,000 movie from Palace/Wicked was produced in association with Miramax, BSB and British Screen. Directed and written by 24 year old Richard Stanley, *Hardware* takes place in a surrealistic future world, somewhere in 21st century America.

The film begins as a simple love story. Jill, a scrap-metal sculptress played by Stacy Travis, is given a metal skull by

her boyfriend Mo (*Hamburger Hill* vet Dylan McDermott). The skull was taken from the infamous warzone and the lovers little realise that it belonged to a robotic soldier, Mark 13. The resulting FX battle of wits and weapons was put together by Paul Catling, a protégé of Image Animation.

*Hardware* also stars John Lynch as Shades, Mo's ever helpful sidekick, William Hootkins as a peeping-ton called Lincoln and Lemmy of rock group Motorhead. Oscar James—who played Tony in *EastEnders*—cameos as Chief, one character who comes to a very sticky end.

The movie is set for simultaneous UK/US release in July. Look out for more info in **FEAR** soon.

## PAN PLANS MEGA-LAUNCH

Possibly the biggest launch campaign and author tour ever will announce Pan Books' strong new list of fantasy, horror and science fiction titles.

Three new imprints, each with their own logo, cover the fantasy, horror and science fiction genres. They have already drawn a favourable response from the book trade and got other publishers worried.

The launch kicks off in April with the release of six new titles. *The Barsom Project*, by Larry Niven and Steven Barnes, is an

action-packed SF adventure set in a dangerous dream park; *Star Scroll*, by Melanie Rawn, continues the adventures of the *Dragon Prince*, a title which gets its A-format and trade paperback launch simultaneously; *Dark Voices: The Best of the Pan Book of Horror* is edited by Stephen Jones and Clarence Paget, who are relaunching the famous anthology with a string of bestselling names and a beautifully designed Dave McKean cover; *First Flight*, by Chris Claremont the *X-Men* and *Excalibur* comics' writer, is a first space opera; and *Jason Cosmo*, by Dan McGirt announces humorous fantasy in a decidedly wild vein.

Other titles include *Moonheart* by Charles de Lint, Joan D Vinge's sequel to *The Snow Queen*, and Pat Murphy's *The City, No Long After*. Each book cover has been produced by genre insiders such as Michael Whelan, Josh Kirby and Dave McKean.

Pan intends to release the titles with a fanfare of parties, author signings and interviews. The next issue of **FEAR** will include a full itinerary of events and an invitation to join in.

## HERBERT IS PAPERBACK KING

James Herbert is still top of the horror stack, according to a recent *Guardian* survey of 1989's top-selling British paperbacks.

*Haunted* ranks twelfth in the list of 100 books, with gross sales slightly above 1,700,000 copies. It is closely followed by Stephen King's *Tommyknockers* at number 13 and the next horror novel on the list is *Lightning* by Dean R Koontz which pulls in at number 47. Clive Barker is also there at number 67 while Peter Straub gets an 80 for *Koko*.

The top fantasy should be Douglas Adams' *The Long Dark Teatime of the Soul* at 11, but this is classed as humour. *King of the Murgos* by David Eddings follows at 54, with *Wyrd Sisters* by Terry Pratchett—this time correctly categorised—at number 56. Pratchett also has a hit at 60 with *Sourcery*.

Science fiction is ill-served on the list with 2061: *Odyssey Three* by Arthur C Clarke at 48, and *Prelude to Foundation* by Isaac Asimov at 84.

While the list is somewhat erroneous, classifying *Lightning* as a horror novel and the hardback edition of *Silence of the Lambs* by Thomas Harris as a paperback, it nevertheless gives an indication that fantasy, horror and, to a lesser degree, science fiction are on the way up.

## FANS COULD FINANCE FILM

Fancy taking a financial stake in a British-made horror movie? That's the question that Type A Films will be asking fans when the organisation begins to fund *Lucid*, a chiller about haunted houses and dreaming, later this year.

The company was set up in 1986 by Paul Chart, a young writer/director, and has several drama and documentary projects in the works. Chart has just finished writing the pilot

episode for a new SF serial called *Justic 2500* and is also scripting a movie called *Headcase* for IF Films.

Production executive John Conway is keen to establish a new method of financing low budget independent films within Britain and believes that some form of help from horror movie viewers would be useful. 'One of the things I am attempting to do with *Lucid* is create a new financing system which will allow horror fans a real chance to play an active role in the production of a British horror movie. Over the last few years the British film industry has tended to shy away from the horror film as somehow not being 'real' filmmaking, leaving the field free for other film industries, particularly the Americans and Italians, to forge ahead.'

The idea has been used before to fund straight-to-video films by inviting large numbers of video distributors and retailers to put up small amounts of money, but if Type A gets the go-ahead, it could mean a breakthrough for independent filmmakers.

(More information will be available in later issues of **FEAR**, so please don't flood our phone lines for details—Ed.)

## RANK GRAB TOP TALENTS

Rank Film Distributors have just announced a heavy fantasy/horror related release schedule this year.

Points of interest are *Monkeys*, the George A Romero shocker, billed for February, *All Dogs Go to Heaven*, the new Don Bluth animated fantasy in which he explores the canine afterlife, released in April, and *She Devil*, the Fay Weldon inspired movie of lust and revenge starring Meryl Streep and Roseanne Barr which opens in May.

On to October, when *Robocop 2* comes on line. Set in Detroit of the future it continues supercop Murphy's fight to recover his human past, and shows him resisting attempts at rehabilitation and battling with another robot designed to replace him. Written by Frank Miller and Walon Green, it's directed by Irvin Kershner and stars Peter Weller, Nancy Allen and Dan O'Herlihy.

Other releases, whose dates have yet to be confirmed, are *Silence of the Lambs* and *Mermaids*. Sounds like its going to be a bumper year.



# FEAR

## FICTION

**A**nother piece of good news from a new author has plopped through our bloodstained portals this month. Way back in FEAR Issue 4 we published a short story entitled The Gravedigger's Tale. The author, Simon Clark, has written to let us know that this story has been plucked from hundreds of others for the Year's Best Horror XVIII, which is scheduled to appear in the autumn. Congratulations from all at FEAR, Simon; keep sharpening that poisoned pen.

If you have a tale to tell, and if it fits FEAR's horror, science fiction or fantasy brief, then send it to David Western, Fiction Editor, FEAR, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB. Please ensure that your story is typed, preferably double spaced, and indicate word length at the head of the typescript. It would also be useful if you could enclose a day-time telephone number, together with a good quality photograph of yourself and a fifty-word biography.

Readers whose stories are being considered for publication will receive notification of this in writing. This is not a guarantee that your story will be published and, as we can only feature a handful of new stories per issue, it could be some time before those eventually selected appear in print.

In the past few months we have been deluged with submissions, therefore it could be some considerable time before you receive a decision regarding your story. Indeed, it could be some months before you receive a positive or negative reply. Also, it makes sense to keep a copy of your story . . . just in case.

We are obliged to remind new writers that FEAR does not look kindly upon works of plagiarism. So if you haven't got anything new to say, don't rip off somebody else; sit back instead and savour another fantasy-packed, horror-filled wedge of fabulous FEAR fiction.



The award-winning author Ramsey Campbell is FEAR's celebrity author this month.

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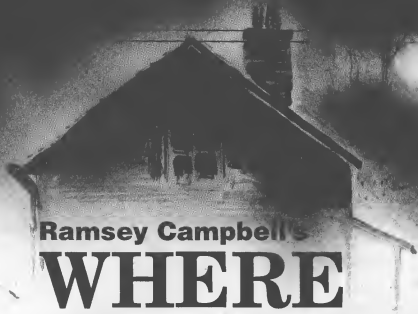
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Ramsey Campbell's

# WHERE THE HEART IS

**"I should have told you that she'd died here in the house"**

**I**'ve just walked through your house. I lay on your bed and tried to see my wife's face looming over me, the way I used to. I spent longest in your baby's room, because that was where I began to die. Before I do, I want to tell you who I am and why I'm here, and so I'm writing this.

I'm at your dining table now, but I won't be when you find me. You'll have found me, or you couldn't be reading this. There may not be much of me for you to recognise, so let me introduce myself again. I'm the man whose house you bought. This is my house, and you'll never get rid of me now.

I've nothing against you personally. It wasn't your fault that the two of you nearly destroyed my wife and me — you weren't to know what you were doing. I can't let that stop me, but at least I can tell you my reasons. The truth is, I never should have let you or anyone else into my house.

Maybe you remember coming to view it, in the rain. I was sitting in the front room, hearing the rain shake the windows and knowing it couldn't touch me. I was feeling peaceful and secure at last. As a matter of fact, I was wondering if the rain might be the last thing I would ever hear, if I could sink into that peace where my wife must be, when your car drew up outside the house.

By the time you got out of your car and ran up the path, you were drenched. I may as well be honest: I took my time about answering the doorbell. Only I heard you saying you'd seen someone in the front room, and that made me feel discovered. So I took pity on you out there in the storm.

I don't suppose you noticed how I drew back as you came in. As you trod on the steps I had the feeling that you meant the house to be yours. Did you realise you hung your wet coats as if it already was? Maybe you were too drenched to wait for me to tell you, but you made me feel redundant, out of place.

**T**hat's one reason why I didn't say much as I showed you over the house. I didn't think you would have listened anyway — you were too busy noticing cracks in the plaster and where damp had lifted the wallpaper and how some of the doors weren't quite straight in their frames. I really thought when we came downstairs that you'd decided against the house. Perhaps you saw how relieved I was. I wondered why you asked if you could be alone for a few minutes. I let you go upstairs by yourselves, though I must say I resented hearing you murmuring up there. And all I could do when you came down and said you were interested in the house was make my face go blank, to hide my shock.

You must have thought I was trying to get you to raise your offer, but it wasn't that at all. I was simply feeling less and less sure that I ought to leave the house where my wife and I had spent our marriage. I told you to get in touch with the estate agent, but that was really just a way of saving myself from having to refuse you outright. I should have told you about my wife. You knew I was selling because she'd died, and you'd made sympathetic noises and faces, but I should have told you that she'd died here in the house.

When you left I went upstairs and lay on the bed where she'd died. Sometimes, when I lay there and closed my eyes to see her face, I could almost hear her speaking to me. I asked her what I ought to do about you, and I thought I heard her telling me not to let my feelings get the better of me, to think more and feel less, as she often used to say. I thought she was saying that I shouldn't let the house trap me, that so long as I took the bed with me we'd still be together. So I accepted your offer and signed the contract to sell you the house, and the moment I'd finished signing I felt as if I'd signed away my soul.

It was too late by then, or at least I thought it was. I'd already agreed to move out so that you could start the repairs and get your mortgage. When the removal van was loaded I walked through the house to make sure I hadn't left anything. The stripped rooms made me feel empty, homeless, as if my wife and I had never been there. Even the removal van felt more like home, and I sat on our couch in there as the van drove to my new flat.

I'd bought it with the insurance my wife had on herself, you remember. We'd always been equally insured. What with our bed and the rest of the furniture we'd chosen together being moved to the flat and her insurance money buying it, she should have been there with me, shouldn't she? I thought so that first night, when I turned off the lamp and lay in the bed and waited to feel that she was near me.

**B**ut there was nothing, just me and the dark. The heating was on, yet the bed seemed to get colder and colder. All I wanted was to feel that I wasn't totally alone. But nights went by, and the bed grew colder, until I felt I'd die of the chill in a place I'd let myself be evicted to, that was nothing like home.

You must be wondering why, if I wanted to be with my wife so much, I didn't consult a medium. My wife was a very private person, that's why — I couldn't have asked her to communicate with me in front of a stranger. Besides, I didn't trust that sort of thing much any more. I hadn't since I'd thought we'd been given a sign that we were going to have a child.

We'd started a child when it was really too late. That was one time my wife let her feelings get the better of her. We'd been trying for years, and then, when she'd given up expecting to be able to, she got pregnant. I was afraid for her all those months, but she said I mustn't be: whatever was going to happen would happen, and we'd be prepared for it, whatever it was. She didn't even make the guest room into a nursery, not that we ever had guests.

She went into hospital a month before we thought she would. The first I knew of it was when the hospital phoned me at the bank. I visited her every evening, but I couldn't see her on weekdays — too many of my colleagues were on their summer holidays. I became afraid I wouldn't be with her at the birth.

Then one evening I saw something that made me think I'd no reason to be anxious for her. I was going upstairs to bed in the dark when I saw that I'd left the light on in the guest room. I opened the door and switched off the light, and just as I did so I saw that it wasn't a guest room any longer, it was a nursery with a cot in it and wallpaper printed with teddy bears dancing in a ring. When I switched on the light it was just a guest room, but I didn't care — I knew what I'd seen. I didn't know then what I know now.

So when they called me to the hospital urgently from work I felt sure the

**"She still had to be alive somewhere, I knew that much"**

**"Years of my life, of all I had left of my marriage, had been stolen overnight"**

birth would be a success, and when I learned that the baby had been born dead I felt as if the house had cheated me, or my feelings had. I felt as if I'd killed the baby by taking too much for granted. I almost couldn't go in to see my wife.

**S**he tried to persuade me that it didn't matter. We still had each other, which was pretty well all that we'd had in the way of friendship for years. But she must have thought it was dangerous to leave me on my own, because she came home before she was supposed to, to be with me. That night in bed we held each other more gently than we ever had, and it seemed as if that was all we needed, all we would ever need.

But in the middle of the night I woke and found her in agony, in so much pain she couldn't move or speak. I ran out half naked to phone for an ambulance, but it was too late. I got back to her just in time to see the blood burst out of her face — I wasn't even there to hold her hand at the end. I just stood there as if I didn't have the right to touch her, because it was my feelings that had killed her, or her concern for them had.

You see now why I didn't tell you where she died. It would have been like admitting I hoped she was still in the house. Sometimes I thought I sensed her near me when I was falling asleep. But once I'd moved to the flat I couldn't sleep, I just lay growing colder as the nights got longer. I thought she might have left me because she'd had enough of me. She still had to be alive somewhere, I knew that much.

By then you'd started work on the house, and I felt as if it didn't belong to me, even though it still did. Sometimes I walked the two miles to it late at night, when I couldn't sleep. I told myself I was making sure nobody had broken in. I remember one night I looked in the front window. The streetlamp showed me you'd torn off the wallpaper and hacked away the plaster. The orange light from outside blackened everything, made it seem even more ruined, made the room look as if it hadn't been lived

in for years. It made me feel I hardly existed myself, and I walked away fast, walked all night without knowing where, until the dawn came up like an icy fog and I had to huddle in my flat to keep warm.

**A**fter that I tried to stay away from the house. The doctor gave me pills to help me sleep, the old kind that aren't addictive. I didn't like the sleep they brought, though. It came too quickly and took away all my memories, didn't even leave me dreams. Only I had to sleep or I'd be out of a job for making too many mistakes at the bank. So I slept away the nights until you got your mortgage and were able to buy the house.

I expected that to be a relief to me. I shouldn't have felt drawn to the house, since it wasn't mine any longer. But the day I had to hand over my last key I felt worse than I had when I'd signed the contract, and so I made a copy of the key to keep.

I couldn't have said why I did it. Every time I thought of using the key I imagined being caught in the house, taken away by the police, locked up in a cell. Whenever I felt drawn back to the house I tried to lose myself in my work, or if I was in the flat I tried to be content with memories of the time my wife and I had in the house. Only staying in the flat so as not to be tempted to go to the house made me feel as if I'd already been locked up. I went on like that for weeks, telling myself I had to get used to the flat, the house was nothing to do with me now. I took more of the pills before going to bed, and the doctor renewed the prescription. And then one morning I woke up feeling cold and empty, hardly knowing who I was or where, feeling as if part of me had been stolen while I was asleep.

At first I thought the pills were doing that to me. It was snowing as I walked to work, it looked as if the world was flaking away around me, and I felt as if I was. Even when I leaned against the radiator in the bank I couldn't stop shivering. I made myself sit at the counter when it was time for the manager to open the doors, but he saw how I was



and insisted I go home, told me to stay there till I got better. He ordered me a taxi, but I sent it away as soon as I was out of sight of the bank. I knew by then I had to come to the house.

You see, I'd realised what was missing. There was part of the house I couldn't remember. I could still recall making love to my wife, and the way we used to prepare alternate courses of a meal, but I couldn't call to mind how we'd spent our evenings at home. I fought my way to the house, the snow scraping my face and trickling under my clothes, and then I saw why. You'd torn down a wall and made two rooms into one.

**W**e must have had a front room and a dining room. Presumably we moved from one room to the other when we'd finished dinner, but I couldn't recall any of that, not even what the rooms had looked like. Years of my life, of all I had left of my marriage, had been stolen overnight. I stood there with the snow weighing me down until I felt like stone, staring at the wound you'd made in the house, the bricks gaping and the bare floor covered with plaster dust, and I saw that I had to get into the house.

I'd left the key under my pillow. I might have broken in — the street was deserted, and the snow was blinding the houses — if you hadn't already made the house burglar-proof. I struggled back to the flat for the key. I fell a few times on the way, and the last time I almost couldn't get up for shivering. It took me five minutes or more to open the front door of my new building; I kept dropping the key and not being able to pick it up. By the time I reached my flat I felt I would never stop shivering. I was barely able to clench my fist around the key to the house before I crawled into bed.

For days I thought I was dying. When I lay under the covers I felt hot enough to melt, but if I threw them off, the shivering came back. Whenever I awoke, which must have been hundreds of times, I was afraid to find you'd destroyed more of my memories, that I'd

be nothing by the time I died. The fever passed, but by then I was so weak that it was all I could do to stumble to the kitchen or the toilet. Sometimes I had to crawl. And I was only just beginning to regain my strength when I felt you change another room.

I thought I knew which one. It didn't gouge my memories the way the other had, but I had to stop you before you did worse. I knew now that if my wife was anywhere on this earth, she must be at the house. I had to protect her from you, and so I put on as many clothes as I could bear and made myself go out. I felt so incomplete that I kept looking behind me, expecting not to see my footprints in the snow.

**I** was nearly at the house when I met one of my old neighbours. I didn't want to be seen near the house, I felt like a burglar now. I was trying desperately to think what to say to her when I realised that she hadn't recognised me after all — she was staring at me because she wondered what someone who looked like I looked now was doing in her street. I walked straight past and round the corner, and once the street was deserted I came back to the house.

I was sure you were out at work. There was such a confusion of footprints in the snow on the path that I couldn't see whether more led out than in, but I had to trust my feelings. I let myself into the house and closed the door, then I stood there feeling I'd come home.

You hadn't changed the hall. It still had the striped Regency wallpaper, and the dark brown carpet my wife had chosen still looked as if nobody had ever left footprints on it, though you must have trodden marks all over it while you were altering the house. I could almost believe that the hall led to the rooms my wife and I had lived in, that the wall you'd knocked down was still there, except that I could feel my mind gaping where the memories should be. So I held my breath until I could hear that I was alone in the house, then I went up to the guest room.

Before I reached it I knew what I'd see. I'd already seen it once. I opened

**"I felt so incomplete that I kept looking behind me, expecting not to see my footprints in the snow"**

the door and there it was, the nursery you'd made for the child you were expecting, the cot and the wallpaper with teddy bears dancing in a ring. My feelings when my wife was in hospital hadn't lied to me after all, I'd just misinterpreted them. As soon as I realised that, I felt as if what was left of my mind had grown clearer, and I was sure I could sense my wife in the house. I was about to search for her when I heard your car draw up outside.

I'd lost track of time while I was ill. I thought you'd be at work, but this was Saturday, and you'd been out shopping. I felt like smashing the cot and tearing off the wallpaper and waiting for you to find me in the nursery, ready to fight for the house. But I ran down as I heard you slam the car doors, and I hid under the stairs, in the cupboard full of mops and brushes.

**I** heard you come in, talking about how much better the house looked now you'd knocked the wall down and put in sliding doors so that you could have two rooms there or one as the mood took you. I heard you walk along the hall twice, laden with shopping, and then close the kitchen door. I inched the door under the stairs open, and as I did so I noticed what you'd done while you were putting in the central heating. You'd made a trapdoor in the floor of the cupboard so that you could crawl under the house.

I left the cupboard door open and tiptoed along the hall. I was almost blind with anger at being made to feel like an intruder in the house, but I managed to control myself, because I knew I'd be coming back. I closed the front door by turning my key in the lock, and almost fell headlong on the icy path. My legs felt as if they'd half melted, but I held onto garden walls all the way to the flat and lay down on my bed to wait for Monday morning.

On Sunday afternoon I felt the need to go to church, where I hadn't been since I was a child. I wanted to be reassured that my wife was still alive in spirit and to know if I was right in what I meant to do. I struggled to church and

hid at the back, behind a pillar, while they were saying mass. The church felt as if it was telling me yes, but I wasn't sure which question it was answering. I have to believe it as both.

So this morning I came back to the house. The only thing I was afraid of was that one of the neighbours might see me, see this man who'd been loitering nearby last week, and call the police. But the thaw had set in and was keeping people off the streets. I had to take off my shoes as soon as I'd let myself in, so as not to leave footprints along the hall. I don't want you to know I'm here as soon as you come home. You'll know soon enough.

You must be coming home now, and I want to finish this. I thought of bolting the front door so that you'd think the lock had stuck and perhaps go for a locksmith, but I don't think I'll need to. I haven't much more to tell you. You'll know I'm here long before you find me and read this.

It's getting dark here now in the dining room with the glass doors shut so that I can't be seen from the street. It makes me feel the wall you knocked down has come back, and my memories are beginning to. I remember now, my wife grew house plants in here, and I let them all die after she died. I remember the scents that used to fill the room — I can smell them now. She must be here, waiting for me.

**A**nd now I'm going to join her in our house. During the last few minutes I've swallowed all the pills. Perhaps that's why I can smell the flowers. As soon as I've finished this I'm going through the trapdoor in the cupboard. There isn't enough space under the house to stretch your arms above your head when you're lying on your back, but I don't think I'll know I'm there for very long. Soon my wife and I will just be in the house. I hope you won't mind if we make it more like ours again. I can't help thinking that one day you may come into this room and find no sliding doors any longer, just a wall. Try and think of it as our present to you and the house.

**RAMSEY CAMPBELL** is Britain's most influential living horror writer. He is the author of several short story collections, including *Dark Companions* and *Cold Print*. His bestselling novels include *Incarinate*, *The Hungry Moon* and *The Influence*. An extract from his most recent novel, *Ancient Images*, was featured in FEAR issue 5 and the book was published in paperback last month. The title and plot of Ramsey's new novel remain a secret, but it is scheduled to appear in September under the Legend imprint.

**"I don't want you to know I'm here... you'll know soon enough"**



# SPEED DEMONS

**ANDREW J WILSON**

**I**t was a bad night and it had been a cold day in Hell.

Rain slicked down the windows and blurred the lights outside. The muggy clinical heat of the hospital made the slush dribble off Drury's boots and his wet leather jacket began to steam slightly. The way people looked at him, you would have thought the crash helmet in his hands was a severed head.

Joey lay on the bed beside Drury and everything about him — the calm expression, the relaxed muscles — made it look as if he could wake up at any moment. But it had been three months

since the crash now, three months without waking up. The longer Joey slept in his coma, the less chance there was of him ever coming back.

A nurse brushed Drury aside and began to sort out the tangle of bed-clothes and intravenous drips.

'You'll have to go now, Mr Drury: time's up and we've got to prepare your brother for the night.'

Drury left. The nurse had confirmed what they all felt: Joey wasn't a person any more, he was just a piece of meat to be dealt with and then forgotten. It was just a body and Joey wasn't in it anymore.

Outside the Western General, Drury kicked his black Ducatti into action and rolled back towards the city centre. It was a wide, straight, empty road, but

**"The way people looked at him, you would have thought the crash helmet in his hands was a severed head"**

he'd lost his nerve since Joey's accident and he stayed well below the speed limit. There was also the noise, an ultrasonic whine that seemed to haunt the streets as he drove on. It was at the limits of his range of hearing, but the thin sound pierced through even the growl of the 750-cc engine and the gusting of the wind. He was bothered by it and momentarily wondered if more speed would drown it out, but a nervous short circuit wouldn't let him pull much more than forty miles an hour from the throttle.

The rain-washed road slipped by like a strip of celluloid. It seemed to Drury that he was watching a film replaying his brother's crash in the reflections of his headlights. Joey's bike had jackknifed at a hundred again. The Yamaha went over the central reservation in a shower of sparks. Something more like a bloody puppet than a human being bounced off the crash barrier and back into the road. Close up, it wore Joey's screaming face.



Drury left the Ducatti in the lock-up garage that he and Joey had shared. He walked the sleet-stained streets to the Jekyll and Hyde and made his way to the back room. It was open late that night and he still had time enough to get drunk.

Moses was waiting for him in a corner behind the pool tables. He had a couple of high-backed chairs to hang their jackets from, and a pint set up. Drury gratefully accepted the invitation and sat down. For a while, they didn't talk.

Moses was a heavy, solid beef tub of a man. He owned a breakers' yard they had used a great deal when they started riding. His fuzzy brown hair was tied back in a knot and he had a couple of incomprehensible tattoos on his forearms. He had ridden with the local Angels in the Sixties, but he was old enough to have rebuilt a Vincent and driven it to Newcastle to see Johnny Kidd and the Pirates. Although Drury didn't need to use the yard much any

more, both Joey and he had become Moses' friends over the last couple of years and they regularly drank together or went down to the breakers' to see him. He seemed a sullen man to those who hadn't won his respect and confidence, but behind his stiff, glum features he had a lot of sense, guts and warmth.

'How's the boy then, Drury?'

'There's no change, Moses. No change at all.'

The conversation dried up and they sat and stared into their drinks. A new crowd came through into the back room and started a game of doubles at the pool table. They were unsteady on their feet, and too fast and sloppy with their shots.

'Oh, Jesus, Moses! How can someone end up wasted like this?'

A bell rang, but not for last orders.

'Hey, Drury, it's your sister!' The barman shouted out, his hand cupped over the phone's receiver.

Drury took the call at the bar and put his fist over his other ear to cut out the background noise.

'Hi Sheena,' he said. He didn't feel like talking to her right then.

'Is there any improvement?'

'None. I'm sorry, but you know I'd have called you if there had been any change...'

'Why did you refuse to take me in tonight?'

'I just don't want passengers riding with me. It's this damn weather...'

She began to sound angry. 'He's my brother too!'

'I know, Sheena, I know. I'll come over to the house next week and get you up on the bus, okay?'

'All right... I'll see you then.' She was mollified, but still upset.

He handed the phone back to the barman and ordered another round.

Moses had been sketching in the beer dregs on the table. He'd made half-formed pictures that trickled out of focus before they were finished. The big man was deep in thought, despite the increasing racket made by the pool play-



ers.

'You know, Drury, I've heard some odd stories in my time. Driving bikes, pushing machines to their capacity, going out on a limb: it's a different world when you're at the limits. You find out things.'

Drury didn't know whether Moses was trying to distract him with a story or tell him something important.

'Like what, Moses?'

'I knew a guy about twenty years ago — he drove an old Norton with a sidecar — who'd flown in the war: tail gunner in a Lancaster bomber. He told me that when they were trying to get out of an artillery barrage he had seen gremlins. The pilot was pulling as much speed and power as he could out of the plane, and this guy said he saw these things crawl out of the clouds and explosions and set to work on the wings. They lost two engines — sheared clean off their mountings — and the Lancaster crashed in the North Sea. He said he was lucky to survive.'

'Do you believe in gremlins, then?'

'No, I don't. But I've heard things, seen things from the corners of my eyes when I've been doing the ton. Nothing much, just enough to give me an idea that there's a territory you enter at the limits, and it's not ours. Whatever's there rules that place and if you fumble, if you fuck up, you're not going to get back here.'

'Shit, man,' Drury whispered. 'You think Joey's lost in some kind of over-the-ton twilight zone?'

'Look, I've just seen things to make me think, that's all. If any of this is for real, we're still talking about a concept, not a place. It's a territory that is everywhere and nowhere, a country of the mind or the soul.'

An argument had broken out over the pool table. Drury might have stepped in once, but he wasn't interested in the inevitable result for at least one of the participants — the hospital.

'Moses, you're drunk.'

'You don't believe any of this, do you? Look, Drury, I'm not trying to cut you up. I wouldn't have told you these things if I didn't think you should hear

them.'

Someone picked up a pool cue and across the table cut an arc that ended on the side of his opponent's head. There was a sound like the white ball potting the black.

'Drury — ' Moses leapt back in his seat as a drunken bystander was accidentally punched across the table, then he jumped to his feet and grabbed Drury's arm.

'I'm sorry, man.'

'Don't be,' Drury said suddenly, 'I know what you're trying to say. I've heard them too.'



The following night, with whisky on his breath and a second bottle in his hand, Drury went back to his lock-up to think, but met James Dean instead. The dead actor was looking a little the worse for wear. Indeed, the rebel without a cause now lacked one side of his face, and his leather jacket was scorched and ripped through to his flesh. Dean, or whatever it was that pretended to be Dean, had been waiting in the garage for Drury's return, and pulled a hideous grin that curled his lips away from his teeth and the surrounding bone. He held out his hand and offered Drury the keys to his Ducatti.

'Live fast, Brian,' he lisped, 'die young. Have a good-looking corpse.'

It was so strange, Drury thought, to hear his first name spoken.

Dean threw the keys at Drury's face and swept his quiff back into place with oil-stained claws. He pulled a soft pack of American cigarettes from his jeans and put one between his lips. Drury's eyes bulged as the actor produced a Zippo lighter and flicked it open. There was an explosive smell of oil and petrol and whisky all around them in the garage.

'We've got Joey, you know,' the creature giggled. 'Took him on the motorway and stole his soul.'

'Oh, suffering Jesus...'

'You can get it back though, Brian, if you want to play with us — up beyond

**"His leather jacket was scorched and ripped through to his flesh"**

**"Live fast, Brian,' he lisped. 'Die young. Have a good-looking corpse'"**  
**"Revenant's the word, man. Look it up"**

the ton. We'll be waiting for you, buddy.' The unlit cigarette wriggled between the actor's shredded lips.

'What would you know about Joey, then?' Drury roared. 'You're a fucking hallucination!'

'Revenant's the word, man. Look it up.'

'Get out of my head!'

'You chicken or something? It's a little bet: you take us on and win and you get your brother's soul back. You lose and we'll see you in Hell...'

Dean finally lit his tab and sucked. The tip of the cigarette flared red and the fumes around his head seemed to catch.

He sank through the floor, his face burning away and laughing.

Drury went home to see his sister. He told her everything.

'Do you really expect me to believe this, Brian?' she gasped. 'You must have the DTs.'

'I doubt it, Sheena,' he said grimly, 'not after the amount of whisky I'd had.'

'So you admit you were drunk!'

'Yes, I admit it, but I've never seen anything like that before —'

She stormed off into the kitchenette to boil more water for his coffee.. Sheena only drank tea. She was beginning to weep. 'Brian, we've got to hold ourselves together for Joey's sake. It's been bad enough over the last three months. I won't be able to stand it if you crack up on me too!'

Drury went to the hatch and picked up the two fresh steaming mugs to carry them through for her. Look, girl, you know what's happened to me: I can hardly ride my bike now. These things — whether they're really out there or just in my mind — are taunting me. I've got to get myself together and go up there, over a hundred, and find them. If there's nothing there, I'll have shaken off this fear, and if it's all true, I can get Joey back. What've we got to lose, Sheena?

'Oh, for God's sake, we've lost Joey already, I'm not going to let you kill yourself as well!'

The mug was burning Drury's hand.

He flung it against the wall and watched the brown tears of coffee spill onto the carpet.

'We haven't lost Joey yet!'

He fled the house and stumbled down the street. The black coffee coloured sky of the city seemed to blur above him. A cat screamed from the roof tops, but behind the sound of the cry the ultra-sonic whine shrieked down the roads.

Drury tried to swallow his spit. Something like a bowling ball was rolling towards him. The object bounced off his boot and slid into the slushy gutter. It was Joey's helmet.



Drury went down to Moses' breakers' yard the following day. They set to work on the Ducatti, stripping it down, cleaning, polishing and reboring, and tuning the engine to perfect pitch. Drury had decided to tell Moses the whole story too, including the scene with Sheena at the house.

Moses backed him up. 'I don't blame your sister, Drury, not at all, but I think you're right. Whatever's going on has to be faced, man. You're doing the right thing for everybody.'

'What was this idea you said you had, Moses?'

'Right.'

He stamped across the yard and into his shed and grabbed a set-up he'd obviously prepared since they had talked on the phone.

'I thought if we were going to do a really thorough job, bearing in mind what you want to try, we ought to fix up one of these.'

Drury regarded the nitro cylinder with admiration.

'Aye, Moses, that could be a very good idea indeed.'

They set about hooking the charger into the engine before the impending storm clouds let loose a blizzard on them. The work was good, it occupied them.

'Drury, don't say anything more about this to Sheena.'

'Why not?' They were wiping their

hands with Swarfega.

'Well, it's done now: you're going for it. I'm not going to say that what she doesn't know can't hurt her, but the less the pair of you worry at each other, the more luck you'll have. Just take her to the hospital to see Joey and avoid the subject.'

The first damp flakes of snow began to spatter their jackets as they left the yard. Drury wheeled the Ducatti out and got on.

'I'll see you in the pub later, Moses.'

'Okay Drury, see you then.'

Drury fired the engine and revved up.

'Hey, Moses,' he shouted through his open visor, 'do you want a lift?'

Moses studied the black motorcycle carefully.

'No, I don't think so, Drury.'

The bike tore away, trying to lose the whine.



The corporation bus rattled and hiccupped, the slush flooding in a dirty wake behind the wheels. Even with nightfall it was clear that the temperature was rising, that winter was finished.

Sheena and Drury didn't talk about their fight at the house. She reached into her bag and found a twist of paper.

'I brought a present for you, Brian.'

Drury unravelled a small, silver St Christopher medallion.

'The patron saint of travellers,' he observed, slightly embarrassed. 'Thanks, Sheena.'

He turned away, and his gaze followed the sodium street lamps drifting past.

'They say he didn't really exist, you know,' Drury mumbled, then wished he'd kept his mouth shut because it sounded so ungrateful. He quickly slung the medal round his neck and dropped it under his collar with one last look, as appreciative as he could make it. They sat in silence until they came to the stop outside the hospital. They ran to the main entrance through the sleet. Drury put his arm around her shoulders to

make sure she didn't fall.

In the deserted reception area, he pulled her up.

'Sheena, don't get me wrong about what I said earlier, on the bus,' he fingered the St Christopher beneath his shirt. 'If you think something's real, then it's real enough. If enough people believe, then that faith's enough to make things exist.'

She smiled at him. 'So Joey will be better again...'

'Aye,' he replied.

They climbed the long ramp of the main corridor in the direction of the echoing stairwell. Although the ward was quiet that night, it seemed to them that Joey's calm sleeping face might open its eyes at any moment.

Moses wasn't in the pub when Drury got there, so he bought himself a double whisky and sat down at their usual table. The destruction caused by the pool table fight had been cleared away, replaced or repaired. Nevertheless, there was still the stale smell of the aftermath in the carpet: dried blood, burns from scattered cigarette ends, a gallon of spilt beer.

The jukebox started to play as a punter slipped ten pence in. Drury vaguely recognised the song as 'Bat Out of Hell'. He looked at his watch: Moses would have to hurry if they were going to get a drink in before last orders.

The Shangri-Las began to sing the story of 'Leader of the Pack'. He'd always liked this one, despite the sugar-coated vocals which betrayed the rather grim content. He rattled his fingernails against the side of his glass to keep time with the music.

Drury phoned Moses, but the number was engaged. As he returned to the back room, he groaned; the jukebox was unleashing 'Dead Or Alive' by Bon Jovi. He drank faster. The sour flavour was good.

The last orders bell went and he gave up on Moses. Sipping the last drops of the double, he got up to leave. The jukebox began to play 'Born to be Wild', an unheard-of fourth selection. Drury clicked his fingers; he liked

**"Thick white clouds of condensing exhaust fumes blew around him like a shroud"**

**"It was their sound, the cry of the soul-stealers and the speed demons"**

Steppenwolf.

At the door, a barman struggled with a rogue dossier. The dishevelled tramp was so dirty and wild that he looked as if he was made up to play a hobo on stage. The crazed man was flailing a Carlsberg can with one hand as the barman tried to remove him.

Drury stared at the figure blocking his way and smiled grimly. The dossier looked the way he imagined Moses might if he reached a hundred and fifty.

'Or me,' he added, to himself.

The music in the back pounded on.

'Whit's he sayn tae it, eh?' the tramp bellowed at Drury.

The biker lay a comforting hand on the old man's shoulders.

'Head out on the highway...'

Drury wheeled the Ducatti out of the lock-up. He slung his leg over the saddle and thumbed the starter. As he gunned the engine, thick, white clouds of condensing exhaust fumes blew around him like a shroud. He rode out like the fourth horseman.

The long, straight road to the western side of the city was practically deserted. Drury could still hear the whine, but it was distant, removed. He was already speeding, but only just. The bike turned over beautifully. The tuning was perfect.

As he passed the airport on the outskirts, a police car came off the side road and drove after him. He continued to accelerate and then the siren began to wail in time with the lights. Drury was about to take the slip road onto the motorway when another bike burst out of hiding behind him. It was a police BMW.

It was at that point that Drury made his final decision. He would not let them bust him on a speeding charge; if Joey's life was at stake, he'd risk a lot more than an endorsement.

He opened up the throttle and was already breaking the motorway speed limit when he joined it. The police came after him. Drury knew that the car couldn't keep up with him, but the other bike might give him trouble. The cycle cop was a couple of hundred yards behind him, so he put him out of his

mind.

Drury crouched down over the tank and let the Ducatti go for it. The needle on his speedometer climbed past one hundred, he was in their territories now.

The sound, the ultra-high-frequency noise, shrieked around him. He'd been wrong to think that he could outrace it before, all he'd heard was an echo on the streets. It was their sound, the cry of the soul-stealers and the speed demons.

He opened the throttle wide and hit a hundred and thirty. Something fluttered at the edge of his vision like a tiny waving hand. The image seemed to fade into the background blur of the receding roadsides as Drury turned his head slightly.

The police car was dropping back. The motorcycle kept pace with him, but the cop didn't seem to have the power or the nerve to try and catch him.

Drury coaxed the Ducatti's engine into another surge of speed. The motorway was mercifully empty up ahead. Control was getting very difficult now. Where were they? They'd promised him Joey's soul if he came this far into their world.

He felt a tremor in the bike's structure somewhere behind him. Something plucked at his boots.

Drury tried to look back and also tried to avoid being battered by the express-train wind. The passenger pillion and the sides of the bike were swarming with as yet indistinguishable shapes. Something began to climb up his back.

His encounter with James Dean had in no way prepared him for these dwarfish creatures. Their eyes were like shattered but still-sparking headlights; their muscles were like cracked cylinders meshed in copper wire under chitinous, carbonised flesh. The gremlin on his back crawled onto his shoulders and gasped boiling smoke from its exhaust-pipe mouth.

Drury fumbled with the combination lock on the chain slung across his chest. With an effort it loosed itself and he flung it behind himself like a flail. The gremlin on his shoulder tried to wrestle

with it before a lash to its chrome skull made it crumble and fall away into space, dissolving in interference like a TV picture.

One of the creatures beneath him was meddling with the engine. He ground his boot into its transmission-like spine and pushed it into the road. The mangled gremlin lost its grip and fell onto the back wheel where it seethed and boiled between the blurred spokes. Shreds of ectoplasm sprayed behind them.

Drury knew that to slow down now would be useless, but the demons seemed to have cheated him. There was no sign of Joey's soul, whatever it might look like. He squeezed a little more acceleration out of the bike.

Then he saw the motorcycle cop in his mirror; the policeman was covered in the vicious monsters. Somehow, his helmet had been loosened. The BMW swayed as the creatures tore it off. Drury saw the cop's face for a moment. His eyes had gone and only raw, blood-spattered sockets stared ahead. Then the man let go of his handlebars and clutched at his face.

The BMW pitched over and the frame snapped. Drury looked ahead. He didn't need the mirrors to see the crash.

The incident only made him more determined to force the demons to honour their deal; but all he'd found in these territories of acceleration was the nest of monsters crawling behind him. He flailed the chain behind himself again. Where had they hidden Joey?

**T**hen he saw that he was approaching a tunnel of sparks strung across the motorway. A glowing fireball spun within it. The gremlins around him hissed out a cloud of exhaust fumes.

The Ducatti entered the sparkling cylinder and Drury reached out for the burning globe with his left hand. Before his fingers could close around it, the James Dean creature sprang over the wind-shield and wrapped its twisted limbs around the motorcycle's forks. Its jagged claws locked round Drury's throat. The demons shrieked and giggled.

Drury used his one nominally free hand to punch the monster's blasted face. The features warped and distended under the punishment. For a moment, it looked more like Donald Campbell than Dean, then it resembled T E Lawrence. Its lips rippled back from the snaggle-toothed maw which kept on opening as the jaw dislocated itself for a wider bite.

The demon screamed the ultrasonic scream.

Drury smashed his chain down and wrenched himself over the handlebars to reach the sparking fireball in front of his face. He opened his mouth and swallowed his brother's soul.

The speedometer needle was touching a hundred and fifty.

Drury began to throttle the careening bike down. The machine bucked under a renewed attack from the gremlins, but as the speed dropped, the Dean-thing's claws fell away from his choking throat and the monster began to bubble and burst like melting plastic.

At a hundred and twenty-five miles an hour, the remains of the shape-changer gave up the ghost and slid beneath the wheels. The Ducatti swerved as if it had gone through an oil slick. Drury managed to wrap his chain around the neck of one of the increasingly desperate gremlins, then he throttled the imitation of life out of it.

**T**he whining chorus of the surviving demons stopped abruptly as he dropped below the ton. They vanished, beaten by some metaphysical crash barrier, and the tortured bike righted itself.

He kept on braking. Only the echoes of the piercing screams remained in his head. His throat tingled and Joey's soul seemed to glow within him. The bike reached seventy-five. Then the rear tyre blew out.

Drury kept the Ducatti upright for another twenty yards, then let it go. From a distance, the crashing bike looked like a giant match being struck along the motorway. Drury got a glimpse of the burning Ducatti disintegrating in an explosion as the fuel tank went up. His scorched leather jacket peeled beneath him. He started to roll

**"His eyes had gone and only raw, blood-spattered sockets stared ahead"**



and lost the feeling in his legs. When the long skid finished, his back was smoking and his blistered hands were speared with broken glass and steel.

He lay on the rubber-burned road and watched the sky. After a time, the police car he'd picked up near the airport arrived. He heard the cops get out and run closer, silhouetted against lights like flash guns.

A face entered his field of vision and said: 'Suffering Jesus...'



The walls of the Western General swam around him. Drury had difficulty keeping his focus, and the perspective from the hurtling stretcher didn't help as he was swept through the Accident and Emergency Department.

The doctors, interns and nurses didn't seem to be making much sense but, then again, he still hadn't got that damn whine out of his ears. He opened his lips to speak and they crackled electrically as something other than words passed out between them. An orderly whirled and stared at him, then turned away, shaking his head.

For a while, he thought he was conscious, but the hands of the wall clock had swapped places and Sheena was beside him weeping hysterically. The ward sister tried to prise her away but failed, then another nurse whispered something in the sister's ear. Drury began to slip away, despite himself, but at least he could hear them now.

'You can do nothing for your brother, Miss. He is about to go into surgery, so you must leave him —'

Sheena began to protest: 'I won't —'

'Sheena! That's your christian name, isn't it? Sheena, I've just been told that your other brother, Joey, has regained consciousness. Would it not be better if we went to see him?'

Sheena reached forward, sorted the medallion on Drury's chest and went with the ward sister. He smiled to himself.

Then a black tunnel closed around him and he fled away.



**ANDREW WILSON** was born in Scotland in 1963. He lives in Edinburgh and works for a medical and scientific publisher. Although this is his first story to see print, he has previously published film criticism. He was a finalist in last year's *Glasgow Herald Science Fiction Short Story Competition*.

# ONE FOR SORROW

John Dickinson



high time you were told exactly what happened.

**D**amn, there's someone coming. It's one of those joggers. We don't usually come across many people this early in the morning, do we? William and I don't much like other folk around; we're quite happy with each other's company. Come on, we'll get out of the way and into this shrubbery until he's passed by.

There, that's better; all nice and peaceful again. Now, where was I? Yes, that's right, your father: that bastard of a man. Oh, I'm sorry, baby, I didn't mean to startle you. I didn't always hate him you know. There was a time when I loved your father, loved him a lot — far too much really. I used to put up with anything for his sake; well, almost anything.

Are you hungry, William? Yes, I bet you are. Come on, let's make it to the next bench, and then we'll have some breakfast. I've got our usual somewhere here in my bag. Your favourite, bread and dripping with lots of salt to bring out the flavour. You really are the sloppiest eater, William, I swear there's as much gone in the pram as in your mouth.

You should see this squirrel hopping along. What a gorgeous little thing, all bouncy and cheeky. It's almost close enough to stroke now. Amazing how animals sense that some people won't harm them, don't you think? Shall we share our food with it? Why not. Look, it's picked up the bread and away up the tree it flies, like a fluffy grey ghost. Some people call them vermin, and even kill the poor mites. We can't understand man's cruelty sometimes, can we?

I was only seventeen when I first met your dad. Starry-eyed, in love with the idea of being in love. He was quite a bit older than me. Looking back, it's one of those all too familiar stories, the sort of thing you read about in novels and agony columns. Anyway, the long and short of it was that we'd hardly begun courting before you were on the way. I wanted, needed, to believe all the things he promised; he was smooth, so plausible. Honour and duty would be satisfied.

**"You're dying to come out and play with Mummy, aren't you?"**

**D**o you know, I like nothing better than strolling through the park with William? It doesn't matter a bit what the weather's like — rain, fog, ice, snow — we saunter along on our morning walk all the same. I couldn't bear to miss even a single day, and I know William feels exactly the same. He can't talk yet, of course, he's only a baby — my little baby. But those big hazel eyes smiling up at me from deep inside the pram tell Mummy that he's thoroughly enjoying himself.

We both love the scents and colours of the flowers, and the sweet bird song here in our lovely park. We like these things doubly so because the park itself nestles right in the middle of this smelly, grimy city. It's difficult to get away, out into the country, what with one thing and another, but I'm determined that William will grow up to cherish nature as much as I do.

You'd be surprised at what he takes in. Some people say that children are like sponges; they remember everything. I'm sure they're right about that. William can't see much, he's lying down and the sides of the pram and the hood obscure his view, but he sniffs and listens, and I describe things to him.

Look, William — magpies. Four of them: one for sorrow, two for joy, three for a girl, four for a boy. They've come together just for you, baby. There's another magpie, hopping about near the rhododendron bushes. Oh dear, one for sorrow: we've had our share of that, haven't we William?

Do you remember your father? There, there — don't upset yourself, darling. Look, I've got a tissue somewhere in my bag. We'll rest for a while, I'll sit on this bench and dry your eyes properly. I know it's painful for both of us, remembering that horrible man, but I think it's

**"I grabbed a  
razor-sharp  
carving  
knife, a good  
foot long"**

We would marry and find a snug and cosy home for the three of us to live in happily every after. Do you know, William, apart from the ever after bit, things worked out just like he said?

Mummy's legs feel as brand new as yours now, baby. Come on, let's push you along towards the beautiful sunrise, and I'll tell you what happened next.

Dear me! Quick, over this way, behind the tree. A man and a girl joined together on the ground. They think we can't see them, but they're wrong. My God, that poor girl! I've got to save her. Yes, these are big enough to do the trick.

Well, William, we've reason to feel proud of ourselves. What a shout he gave when the first stone smacked him on the arse! It did the trick though. They called me some saucy names; I hope you didn't hear, because both of them were very rude to me. I'm surprised at the girl though; you'd think she'd have been grateful. Anyway, we've seen them off and let's hope they've learned some sense. She may have done, but I'll bet he hasn't.

He bought me bouquets at first, great bunches of carnations, roses and tulips. I would place them carefully around the house in vases and bowls, and when I ran out of containers I even resorted to jam-jars. Each room was transformed into a summer garden, filled with a heavy fragrance. The flower beds in our park remind me of those golden days. They were shining times, weren't they baby? There were presents too. Nothing fancy, just nice little surprises now and again. Then all of a sudden the stream of flowers and presents stopped: and the drinking started.

To begin with he would arrive home at five-thirty on the dot every night, and there I was, the dutiful and loving wife, with a piping hot dinner waiting for him. He'd tuck into his meal, and jiggle you up and down on his knee at the same time. You were only a very tiny baby then, but you remember those happy days don't you, William? Yes, I can see your eyes twinkling. Thankfully you were tucked up in your cot, fast asleep, when later on he began to roll

home from the pub.

I grew to dread the sound of him fumbling with the latch-key after closing time. My frustration was taken out on the food he snubbed; I would hurl it into the bin, or watch the sticky mess slide down the white kitchen walls, whilst he took out his own sadistic frustration on me. The shouting and insults were cruel and painful, but I could cope with them. I even learned to live with the agony inflicted by those heavy fists as they crunched into my face and body. Do you know the secret of my survival? Even in my husband's most savage frenzies, there was no expression his face or eyes. It was as if his soul had fled, and I was being violated by a dead man: a zombie. Sometimes my features looked like one of those left-over dinners; yet when you, William, were wheeled down the road to the shops, I could still manage a crooked smile for the disapproving neighbours.

We've arrived at the quiet end of the park now — our end — where no one ever comes. You know where we are, don't you William? Yes you do, I can see you squirming under the covers. You're dying to come out and play with Mummy, aren't you? Come on, my beautiful boy, let me lift you out. Why you're as light as a feather; I'm really going to have to feed you up. There we are, you lie down next to me on this crunchy bed of leaves, and I'll finish the story.

As I say, I could put up with all the foul things he did, but then one night he decided to pick on you. That monster had blundered home, dead drunk as usual; but, for some reason, after he had finished laying into me he still wasn't satisfied. I was huddled in a corner of the kitchen, nursing my wounds, when I heard him go upstairs. What a commotion! There was banging, swearing, you were wailing. Then back down to the kitchen he came, dragging you behind him. The mindless creature that had been my husband held you by the legs with one hand, and began to bash your head against the wall. That delicate skull was so soft, my baby William, that it made a squishing sound like ripe fruit each time he swung you.

Mummy rescued you though, darling. That wretched man got just what he deserved. I grabbed a razor-sharp carving knife, a good foot long, one of his presents. Well, the gift was returned — straight into his back. The first strike probably skewered his liver; I was amazed at how easily the blade slid into his flesh. Your dad though, he was even more amazed. He turned round very slowly, stared dully at me for a long moment, and then, laughing hollowly, carried on whipping you against that hard stone wall. I couldn't believe it. Thrust after frantic thrust seemed to have absolutely no effect at all. In the end I managed to push the knife through his left eye, and down he went, crumpled in a pool of his own gore, still clutching your ankles.

You looked a bit of a mess, I must say, William. But Mummy cradled you under the tap and washed all the blood and bits of flesh away. When I fastened your white lace cap around your poor head, and slid that tiny jacket and matching trousers on, why, you looked as good as new. You're wearing those same clothes now, William, and my goodness, aren't you quite the handsome prince?

Once my baby was sorted out and tucked up back in his cot there remained the problem of what to do with that thing in the kitchen. Well, do you know, I went downstairs and waded straight into the carnage? I swear I've never felt so cool and relaxed in my life. What was I going to do though, with my kitchen like a slaughter-house and fourteen stones worth of corpse to dispose of? The answer lay on the mantelpiece, inside a box of matches. But before I could do anything I had to make sure that you were safe, my dearest William. I wrapped you up nice and warm in a blanket, because even summer evenings can be chilly, and we crept up the hill to the park. Your pram fitted nice and snug inside a dense grove of holly bushes. I took a suitcase too; one was quite enough. There wasn't that much, apart from your clothes and photographs, that I wanted to keep; a few pieces of cheap jewellery I'd been given as a girl, and

some clothes of my own, that was about it. I remember singing your favourite lullaby, over and over, until you were asleep, then I strode back down the hill.

A gallon of paraffin goes a very long way. I poured it all over him until he glistened with the stuff, then struck a match and dropped it into the gaping, bloodied mouth. What a lovely blaze; all crackling, popping and hissing. He shrank quite a bit, baby, as the flesh dried and withered on his bones. I really couldn't resist a quiet smile. Life had suddenly become much less complicated.

Eventually the flames and smoke drove me out of the house, and I started to scream, playing an Oscar-winning role of the distraught wife and mother. Bells clanged and sirens wailed as I allowed the neighbours to restrain me from the inferno. Well, it worked like a charm. I told the police how your father must have come home drunk and knocked over the paraffin stove. Everyone knew he drank too much. They never found you, of course, but then there wasn't much left of anything after the roof caved in. People were very kind to me afterwards; particularly Milly — no, you don't know her — anyway, she let me stay with her over in the next street.

There we are then, William. That's what happened. It is time you knew the truth. Do you think I did a bad thing? No, you've always stuck up for your old mum, haven't you? Come here, let me give you a cuddle. I don't know, we really must do something about your pram. What with those rusty wheels and patches of nasty green mould on the canvas... Mummy isn't looking after you as well as she should.

William, William, I really don't know what's to become of you when I'm gone. I worry about that a lot these days. I reckon I'm quite sprightly for my age, but the hill up to our park is awfully steep for a seventy-five year old. Anyway, let's not worry about silly things like that today. Come on, give Mummy a big kiss, and we'll hide my baby away for sleepy-byes till tomorrow.



**JOHN DICKINSON** lives and works in the North West. Although he has been writing short stories for a few years, *One For Sorrow* is his first venture into the horror genre.

**"You looked a bit of a mess, I must say, William"**

"She became aware of two shadowy figures skating either side of her"

# THE GALACTIC GRAVE ROBBERS

Duncan Adams

Carrie was not usually a deceitful girl. The convent school back on distant Earth had seen to that. But fathers could be so unreasonable, she mused as her skates bit into the ice.

'Hi, Carrie!' called a cheery voice. 'Bet you can't catch me!'

Thoughts of her pipe-chewing father evaporated as Carrie saw Lanna swerving between the parked spacecraft. Then she too was flashing over the ice, dodging the fuelling tenders and stacks of supplies, skating madly after her friend.

It was as she was passing the embarkation shed that disaster struck. Her eyes were firmly fixed on Lanna, and she failed to see the emerging shuttle manager until far too late. He made an oomphing sound as she drove the air out of his lungs, then cursed as they slid along the treacherous ice together.

'Carrie!' he snapped as he picked himself up. 'How many times have you been told? Not near the sheds!'

'I'm sorry, I didn't think...'

'You never do,' he said. 'Look, there are over twenty hectares, why do you have to skate around the sheds, eh? The spaceships have smoothed the ice for hundreds of metres. There are much better places to skate!'

'Like the ribbon?' she asked, her eyes wide with hope.

'No,' said the man. 'Not like the ribbon. Don't go anywhere near the ribbon. And keep away from the sheds as well, you hear!'

◆◆◆◆◆

'I hear you bumped into Ivan Moskviks today,' said her father as they ate their evening meal.

He was smiling, and Carrie knew he was making a joke. But she found it difficult to smile back, for the deceit was in her mind again. Perhaps, if she tried



just once more, her father would give permission and the deceit would be unnecessary.

'He doesn't like us skating round the sheds,' she said. 'He told us to find somewhere else. Perhaps we could go on the ribbon...'

'No!' snapped her mother before her father could open his mouth. 'Tell her, Myke. Tell her she mustn't go near it!'

'I already have,' he said, rising from the table and sinking into his chair by the heater; he turned it up, then meticulously filled his pipe.

'But why not?' Carrie protested. 'I'm a good skater, and I couldn't possibly get lost.'

'You won't get round me,' he said emphatically, as he lit the pipe. 'Perhaps this is as good a time as any to tell you: your mother and I have been talking, and we think you'd be better off back on Earth. We've been thinking of sending you to live with Aunt Jessica...'

'No, I want to stay here,' she protested.

**B**ut there's nothing for you to do, dear,' her mother said. 'This world's frozen solid, and there's only the spaceport. You'd be better off back on Earth. Your father's research is going to take an awful lot longer than any of us expected.'

'I want to stay,' Carrie said petulantly. 'And I don't see why I shouldn't skate on the ribbon. We flew over it in the skimmer, and it runs for miles and miles. It's dead safe, really it is.'

'All right,' said Myke resignedly. 'I'll tell you why not. I just didn't want to frighten you, that's all. You know why we're here, on this frozen planet, don't you?'

'You're trying to find an ancient intelligent culture, if there ever was one, and then excavate it,' she said, then added: 'but you aren't doing very well up to now.'

'And we set up our first base by the ribbon,' said Myke, not rising to her bait, 'because it looked artificial. Long, smooth ribbons of ice don't just happen by accident.'

'But this one did,' she insisted. 'You've

probed it every way you know how, and found nothing!'

'That's not the point,' said Myke carefully. 'When the first landing party arrived here, months before us, they said the ribbon was haunted...'

'Haunted!' Carrie mocked. 'That's kid's stuff. You're supposed to be scientists!'

'Nevertheless, that's what they said,' Myke said levelly. 'Three of them had some sort of experience, but we never got the details because they were quite insane afterwards. All we know is that it happened somewhere along the ribbon, and that's why no one ever walks down it. We always use the skimmers.'

'They just got space crazy,' said Carrie. 'It was nothing to do with the ribbon.'

'We thought of that,' said Myke. 'But the medics said not. They saw something all right, or at least they thought they did. So stay away from that ribbon, Carrie, you hear!'



**C**arrie had temporarily lost the argument about going back to Earth, and there was only a week left before she would depart. There was barely enough time in which to persuade her father to change his mind. For a while she had even thought of abandoning her proposed trip down the ribbon, not so much because she was afraid of spooks, but out of despair at the prospect of life with Aunt Jessica and the need to persuade her father not to impose it on her.

But she knew she couldn't leave without skating that ribbon. Having seen it from the air, she knew it was the most beautiful place in the universe. So she intended to do it. The deceit that had been growing in her mind would become reality, and the venture would be all the more exciting for the talk of hauntings.

So she lied to her mother, saying she was spending the day with Lanna, and she lied to the security officer, saying she was doing an errand for her father. Instead of drill bits, the rucksack con-

**"She felt them grip her elbows, pushing her faster down the ribbon"**

**"Why didn't he look her way? Why couldn't he see her?"**

tained her skates, a flask of hot coffee and a packet of sandwiches.

The sun was warm, as it usually was during the ice age day time, the high albedo and frozen nights frustrating the prospect of a thaw. Her crampons bit into the ice as she trod the path out of the main area towards the research complex on the edge of the ribbon. As soon as she thought no one could see her, she left the path and began to skirt the perimeter. It was nearly an hour before she was able to remove her crampons and fasten on her skates.

This was the nearest she had ever been to the ribbon. The broken glaciation of the planet's surface gave way to ice as smooth as that at the spaceport where it was constantly melted and refrozen. The ribbon stretched like a motorway into the distance, eventually vanishing amongst the soaring peaks. It was there that she had seen the first signs of beauty when she flew over it in her father's skimmer.

Cautiously, almost fearfully, she stepped onto the ribbon, stood motionless for a moment, then pushed off with her left foot. Leaning forwards, she allowed her young legs to thrust her towards the beckoning mountains. Exhilaration quickened her heart along with the exercise, and the ice flashed beneath her feet.

**W**hen she entered the first valley, the intense cold struck through her clothing. She hadn't anticipated that the frozen mountains would hide the sun, or that the wind would moan through the valley with such a chilly voice. For a moment she considered returning, then she made up her mind and skated on. She had come this far, and decided not to turn back until the cold became unbearable.

But where was the beauty? Where were the bordering spires of ice she had seen from the skimmer? Where were the frozen arches? The ice flowers, carved by the wind? The reflecting domes of arctic cathedrals? Her father had grunted that they were only ice boulders when she had pointed them out to him, and that was certainly all they were

now. But they hadn't been, not when she'd first seen them. Could she have been mistaken? No, she was sure not. Perhaps they were around the next twist in the valley.

But it was the same: intense cold, freezing wind, and shapeless lumps of ice by the side of the ribbon. There was nothing of beauty.

Then she emerged into the sunlight, and with the warmth came new determination. More ice fields stretched beside her, and a couple of miles farther on another valley beckoned. Perhaps that was the one with the spires and domes.

The ribbon began to fall away downhill. As she thrust herself forwards, she was only vaguely aware that it would be an arduous business skating back. She was moving very fast when she entered the next valley, but her dismay was absolute as she saw it was lined by another featureless jumble of ice blocks.

The ribbon sloped downhill even more sharply, and she knew she was heading into real danger. The night was still many hours away, but if she was caught in it she would surely perish. If she followed the ribbon much farther, she might not get back before the night enveloped her.

**I**t was time to stop. It was time to admit defeat and turn back. She braced herself, preparing to twist sideways to execute a skidding, ice-chip flying stop.

But she never did it.

She became aware of two shadowy figures skating either side of her. Her stomach turned over, her mind reeling as she denied the truth of it, then she forced herself to turn her head sideways to look. There was nothing. She looked forwards, and became aware of them again, right on the very periphery of her vision. They were far taller than she, and slender, flashing along at her side.

Then she felt them grip her elbows, pushing her faster down the ribbon.

Again she looked, and again there was nothing, but the pressure on her elbows persisted. She tried to shake her arms free, but they held fast.

Then she screamed.

The cry echoed around the icy mountains, dying away in the wind. She panicked: her control completely deserted her, and she tried to throw herself to the ground, to fall deliberately in an attempt to halt her crazy passage down the never-ending ribbon. The hands supported her elbows, and for a while her feet left the ice and she was carried. She screamed again and again, and it seemed the more she screamed, the faster the two silent, almost-invisible beings skated.

They flashed out of the valley, through more ice fields, another valley, and then into ice fields again. Her skates were back on the ribbon and she had stopped struggling; she allowed herself to be guided, shocked but unprotesting, to where — she knew not.

Then she saw something different by the edge of the ribbon. It was green and yellow, subtly indistinct, but she instantly recognised it as her father's survey skimmer. Even as they sped towards it she saw dozens of plumes of ice shoot skywards as her father's team detonated a series of charges in the ice. Men would be studying the seismic trace on the paper spewed out by the machines in the skimmer.

When the ice had finished raining back down, she saw her father's red hard hat appearing from cover. Why didn't he look her way? Why couldn't he see her? He was right on the very edge of the ribbon, his head down, studying an instrument. Other men were clustered around him, someone was bound to see her. But they didn't.

As she shot past, screaming to burst her lungs, none of them so much as glanced at her. They seemed indistinct, sort of fuzzy at the edges, and she wasn't certain whether they were actually there or not.

But if her father was indistinct, the two beings at her side were becoming less so. She forced herself to look sideways again, and this time the creatures did not disappear. Like her father, they were fuzzy, but she could make out detail now. They were about two and a

half metres tall, slimmer even than she, and they appeared to be naked. Their skin was jet black, flecked with dark red, especially on their legs which were disproportionately long. Multi-jointed arms sprang from narrow shoulders which supported a long, thin head. Four eye-like structures sat on the forehead, two either side of the head, and two roughly where her own were. There were no ears or nose, but a small mouth hung slightly open to expose the tips of shiny, black teeth. There was an indefinable sadness about these strange beings.

Even as she looked, terrified, they became more substantial. A soft voice touched her mind, tendrils of kindness gently easing into her awareness.

'Do not be afraid,' it said. 'We mean you no harm.'

Not knowing why, she believed the voice. Although the creatures at her side were terrifying to behold, there was no reason to fear them. Apart from propelling her against her will, they had done nothing to hurt her.

She found that they were slowing down. She was no longer skating, and the ice was gone from beneath her feet. She was walking barefoot through soft, lush grass, and she could see the flat, disc-like feet of the two aliens walking by her side. They no longer held her elbows, but strode out as though they knew she would follow, as indeed she did.

In the distance, what she assumed to be a city rose delicately by the side of a lake. As they drew nearer, she recognised the spires and arches, minarets and domes she thought she had seen frozen at the sides of the ribbon. Flowers, freed of the ice that had embraced them in her vision, bloomed all around her, even spilling from the crevices in the old, stone walls of the city itself as the three of them passed by.

If the exterior of the city seemed medieval, the interior was unlike anything she had ever seen on Earth. Old buildings supported by intricate flying buttresses abounded, but they were

**"Now we will show you the secret of our world, and perhaps you can help us"**

**"I know  
where the  
aliens are,"  
she said  
flatly"**

interspersed with huge floating spheres connected by transparent tubes through which aliens walked lazily. Walls of water fell into ornamental pools to be thrown skywards again by gilded fountains, and brightly plumed birds fluttered amongst the black, multi-jointed beings who strode between the buildings and entered and exited the ubiquitous tubes.

'This is our oldest city,' the voice said. 'This is the most peaceful place in the universe, for here we have studied peace for thousands of years. But the ice is coming, and our planet is doomed. Come, please.'

She followed her two guides into one of the transparent tubes. It was a strange sensation, like walking through the air itself, then they passed through the first of the spheres where aliens scurried in and out of doors, performing the business of their world. Then out into another tube, climbing still higher, until they reached a platform from which stretched a far longer tube. It disappeared into the side of a mountain some ten kilometres away.

Her companions climbed into a pod at the entrance to the tube, motioning her to join them. There was a hiss of air, like a long sigh, and they began to speed towards the mountain.

'Remember the shape of this mountain,' said the voice. 'The ice will never cover it. Now we will show you the secret of our world, and perhaps you can help us.'



**T**wenty five kilometres from the base, on the ribbon,' shouted Myke, anger and concern trembling his voice. 'In the middle of an ice age, Carrie!'

'But if you'll just let me explain,' she said, tears in her eyes.

'You must have been mad!' he said, his tone softening. 'If I hadn't found your skates and come looking... night was only half an hour away... have you any idea how near to dying you were?'

'But I was perfectly safe...'

'Bed, young lady. We'll discuss this in the morning. Thank God you're going back to Earth!'



**C**arrie faced her father over the breakfast table. She hadn't slept that night, and her thoughts had been a turmoil. At first, she'd been angry at him for refusing to listen to her, but as her own anger had dissipated she realised he must have been worried sick. He seemed a lot calmer as he sipped his coffee and peered at her questioningly over the rim of his cup.

'I know where the aliens are,' she said flatly.

'Oh?' he raised his eyebrows. 'This planet has been covered in ice for at least three million years — so long that there aren't even any bacteria left in the atmosphere — and you met aliens?'

'I met their memory,' she said respectfully. 'I saw their world the way it used to be, and I saw the machines that keep that memory alive. They made the ribbon as a marker, to attract other intelligent life...'

'You mean you hallucinated,' he said, shaking his head. 'Extreme cold can do that, especially when coupled with fear. You must have been frightened out of your wits, so far from the base with night coming on.'

'Humour me, then,' she said, reaching across the table and gripping his arm.

'Take me up in the skimmer, and I'll show you the aliens. If I don't, I'll go back to Earth without any more argument.'

'Let me finish my coffee,' he said wearily.



**C**arrie managed to contain her excitement when the familiar shape of the mountain came into view. The aliens hadn't been exactly right. The mountain had remained free of ice, but the entrance hadn't stayed open. It was hidden behind a boulder that had fallen down the rock face. This made it

even more dramatic when she told her father to land on the ledge, and then showed him the almost completely blocked entrance.

'Stay in the skimmer,' he ordered, his face becoming serious.

'I know this place,' she retorted. 'You need me.'

He looked at her long and hard, nodded, then took a torch from the skimmer's stowage compartment. It was Carrie who led the way, pushing past the boulder, then waiting until he struggled in after her.

'You don't need the torch,' she said, pulling on a lever. 'The ribbon's still working, so there must still be power.'

As she spoke, the vault was slowly filled with light. 'They told me the power comes from the molten core of the planet,' she said as her father surveyed their surroundings.

The vault was about ten metres in diameter and contained only two features: a lead chest and a staircase leading down. He heaved the heavy lid off the chest, carefully removed one of the paper thin metal plates within it, and studied its intricate markings.

'It's a history of their planet,' said Carrie. 'And all their philosophy — everything they thought worth keeping. They wanted another intelligent race to have it, so they could learn from it. They mastered the art of living in peace, you see. They thought that was valuable...'

'It is,' said Myke, his voice hushed. 'Very valuable. Where do the stairs go?'

'Down below the ice,' she replied. 'The entire race is down there, frozen solid. It's a sort of suspended animation.'

'And they expect us to thaw them out? Is that it?'

'That's what they were hoping,' said Carrie.

'But we're exploring space because we're already overpopulated,' he said. 'There's no way the government would agree...'

'They suspected that,' said Carrie, 'but they said the plates were valuable, so if anyone took them, they should repay it by reviving the race and resetting them.'

'How many are there?'

'About twenty million.'

'No way,' he said, shaking his head sadly. 'Earth will never permit it.'

'They suspected that as well,' said Carrie. 'So they asked that you put the plates back in the lead chest for the next race of explorers to discover. They said the plates were the only means they had of negotiating the survival of their species, and that you'd understand.'

Myke was very quiet then. Carrie studied her father's face, but it was blank in a way she'd never before seen it.

'We've finished here,' he said, suddenly replacing the plates in the lead chest and then closing the lid. 'I don't think our alien friends would want to live in the same universe as us humans anyway. We're going to keep this place our secret, Carrie. In a few months I'll announce that there's nothing of interest on this planet, then we'll abandon it.'

'But shouldn't we tell Earth?' said Carrie, amazed at her father's attitude.

'What for? You know what they'll do, don't you? They'll take the plates anyway, but forget all about the aliens. No, we'll do as they asked — leave everything as it is for another civilisation to find. That ribbon was meant to attract the right sort of person, Carrie, someone with the innocence of a child, like you. That's why the original explorers went mad. Clever people our aliens.'

'But couldn't we copy the plates anyway?' said Carrie, her eyes innocently wide.

'What's the point?' said Myke sadly. 'They explain how to live in perfect peace. Mankind could never understand that. Water off a duck's back, Carrie. Besides, Earth will excavate the entire planet, and that'll be the end of the aliens' hopes for ever.'

'Like grave robbers,' said Carrie softly.

'Exactly! So it stays our secret, Carrie. Right?'

'Right, dad.'

Myke slipped his arm round his daughter's waist, then led her out of the chamber.

DUNCAN ADAMS' first piece of fiction for FEAR appeared in issue 9 and was a psychological horror story entitled *Over the Top*. His second appearance in these pages is marked by a change of genre and tone to that of science fiction. Mr Adams was born in 1943 and lives in Lancashire.

**"They mastered the art of living in peace, you see. They thought that was valuable..."**





# GRAVEN IMAGES

Jessica Palmer

Michael Davelini sat in the blood red light contemplating the skeletal image before him. The disembowelled wax figure bore a striking, if not unexpected, resemblance to a major film star — with a few minor differences. The imitation had begun to do a slow, molten dissolve. The eyes drooped. Skin peeled from flesh, and flesh from bone. As Michael lifted his drink to his lips, something crashed overhead. He jumped to his feet, no longer considering the statue.

'What the hell...?' Michael muttered under his breath as he bounded up the stairs, taking them two at a time. He paused, head cocked, listening. The serene silence mocked him. He moved down the hall and stopped in the doorway of the guestroom. His hand hit the switch. A glowing demoniac face leered from across the bed. He ignored its grinning visage. Nothing had been disturbed. He turned the light out and it continued to glow, iridescent.



He walked to the master bedroom and there repeated the process. His cat, Ming, looked up lazily from her perch on the back of the easy chair and let out a hoarse mew as if to protest at the rude awakening. Apologising, Michael went to the last bedroom which he had set up as an exercise room. Arms, cut off at the elbow, were mounted on plaques and nailed to the wall. Some had flesh, others did not. The exposed tibias and fibulas extended to bony digits from which hung a jump rope, a sauna suit and sneakers. The hand of the last arm, which faced the door, was clenched in a fist, the middle finger extended in rebuttal to those who complained about the decor.

Pausing at the top of the stairs, Michael eyed the attic door. No, he thought, too much trouble. Besides, the attic only contained more of the same — twisted, amputated limbs and other body parts like rubber intestines, glass eyes, masks with their faces half-gnawed, burned or permanently blown off. He went downstairs to finish his Martini.

His approving gaze swept round the living room, taking in the mummified hand holding an ashtray, the statue, the line drawings from various films and the floating head. Everyone asked how Davelini could live surrounded by all this. The truth was that he liked his house this way. He was proud of his work, and he found the company of his imps and demons preferable to that of most humans.

Davelini began to bring miscellaneous pieces home when he ran out of room at the shop. His wife had strenuously objected. No, Linda hadn't liked it at all, but she didn't like a lot of things, and that's why their marriage had failed. You'd think she would have understood that it was his livelihood. It paid for those damn silk undies she farted through and got Michael Jnr, the wimp, into the best schools.

His son had been a major disappointment to him. The kid wanted to become a choreographer, ferchrissakes. That douchebag was no son of his, no seed of his loins. Davelini strongly suspected that Linda had had an affair with the tennis pro at the club. His son had the same pretty-boy face, insipid eyes and weak chin.

He and Linda had always fought. He wondered what had possessed him to marry her. Their marriage had been one long, continuous battle — over the child, the house and his job. When Davelini had decided to take his work home it had gone over like a lead balloon. Linda's attitude had been unforgivable — the last straw. His mind returned to her last night there. She had stood in some fancy nightie, which he supposed was meant to increase his ardour, and screamed at him. Fucking screamed at him. Her face flushed, spittle spraying out with each word. She hadn't been a very pretty sight.

You goddamned bastard! You treat your creatures better than you treat your family. You think more of them than you do of me.'

He had stared at her and silently agreed. If she could have seen herself, maybe then she would have understood. Even his most gruesome creations looked a damned sight better than she did at that moment: jaw clenched, eyes bulging in rage.

You disgust me — you and your crap. I don't even want you to touch me.'

That had been too much. For the first time in fifteen years, Michael was moved to violence. He grabbed the first thing he saw, a claw, and ran for her. She fled, shrieking into the darkness.

**"Arms, cut off at the elbow, were mounted on plaques and nailed to the wall"**

**"Demons,  
slimy  
creatures,  
monsters  
and  
anatomical  
parts  
adorned  
every room'**

He could still hear her as she wailed in the night: 'You can't beat me into submission like you do your damn beasts.'

**H**e had wanted to kill her then. Linda had embarrassed him in front of the neighbours — it was more than he could stand. He'd watched her hobble barefoot down the long, gravel drive to the road. In his mind, he did to her every vile thing he had ever imagined. Mentally he peeled her skin away from her facial muscles as she screamed in agony and begged for forgiveness. Then he delighted as he separated muscle fibre from muscle fibre — while she still lived and breathed — in a reverse action of what he did every day with each new creation. He smiled at the thought of seeing her disembowelled and flailed. In a sick, final fantasy, he envisioned her splayed across the floor as he got two of his robots to pull her slowly and irrevocably apart — drawn and quartered.

After she left, Michael hired a shyster lawyer who was just a little bit smarter than her shyster lawyer. He got the house, and when it was legally his, he decorated it the way he damned well pleased. Demons, slimy creatures, monsters and anatomical parts adorned every room. With a somewhat perverse sense of humour Davelini replaced all the hooks in the front hall closet with various and sundry amputated limbs he had as leftovers from different films. It was only wax, after all.

Davelini couldn't believe that he was about to make the same mistake again; but Carol was different. She was proud of his work and his artistry. She was young and beautiful, and doted on him. She had all the requirements he sought in a wife. He hoped marriage wouldn't change her.

His house was a favoured place for the studio Halloween party. This year it would be a combined wedding and office bash. Last year's soirée had been a humdinger. Davelini had installed a mechanical hand in the bathroom which, when activated by the light switch, would creep down the wall and grab the unsuspecting occupant. One

irate director had, in a tongue-in-cheek comment, sent Michael his dry-cleaning bill.

Davelini discovered he liked living this way, and again he wondered if he was making a mistake in marrying Carol. The statue in the corner didn't bitch when he was late home from work, and the various arcane devices never felt a twinge of jealousy.

**W**ith a laugh, Davelini put his glass down on the coffee table. The ice clinked softly. He turned on the small spots, specially designed to show his art in its most gruesome aspect, and went upstairs to bed. It was going to be a busy day tomorrow.

He woke an hour or so later with a start. He tried to imagine what could have possibly awakened him, he didn't remember any dream. Then he heard the loud thump. He tilted his head to the left, trying to locate the direction the sound. Nothing. He swung his legs over the edge of the bed, listening intently, and groped for the bedside lamp, a converted decapitated head from one of the many versions of Dracula. His hand found the ear in which he had embedded the switch. and he turned it on.

Michael ignored the face frozen in a silent scream, and grabbed his robe. Nothing still, no sound. He relaxed and got back into bed. Then he heard it again. It was definitely coming from inside the house — somewhere downstairs. Michael started for the door, but paused at the head of the stairs. Hearing a muted mew, he sighed. His Siamese cat, Ming, had undoubtedly found some fascinating toy.

Relieved, Michael returned to bed. He switched out the light and descended immediately into sleep. Ming blinked and rose from where she lay buried in the clothes he had dumped unceremoniously on an easy chair. She stretched, yawned and jumped down onto the floor. Then she padded across the room, leapt on the bed and curled up on the pillow next to Michael's head. He petted her sleepily. 'You got to learn to be more quiet, Ming.' Unconcerned with the undeserved reprimand, she wrapped her

tail around her body and purred contentedly.



Michael returned from work the next day grumpy and irritable. One project, already late and over budget, had ground to a halt because of technical difficulties. He had spent the day with an angry producer and director breathing down his neck, and had taken them out for lunch to get them off his back. It had worked. He had left them getting quietly soused in the restaurant and returned to work. But by the time he left that evening, most of his projects were still undone and the problem still unsolved.

He placed the cardboard cartons of chop suey and sweet and sour pork he was carrying into the microwave and headed for his studio. The late afternoon sun filtered in through the skylight, colouring the room in a rosy glow that belied the fiendish aspect of half-completed mechanical imp which stood on his work stand. Davelini leaned over the schematics on his drafting table.

The imp was his pet project, something he had to complete for a weekly TV series. Ever the master craftsman, he brought his favourite projects home with him. He'd wile away the evening hours — moulding, shaping, if necessary torturing the creatures of his dementia into submission. He had yet to sculpt the musculature, and the metal, wire, levers and pulleys were all visible.

Davelini walked round to the front of the stand, playing absentmindedly with the controls. He pressed a button, and thick red fluid oozed through the pointed teeth. Another button worked the eyebrows and the ears. A wired remote, like a joystick, operated the hand. He played with the mechanism, and the hand opened slowly.

Michael put down the remote and walked around the table once more to admire his work. As he completed his circuit, the hand snapped shut. 'Damn,' he muttered. Just what he needed. He'd have to take it to the shop tomorrow. He

flipped the switch to heat the wax from which would come the muscle and sinew to surround the servo arm. Dinnertime.

He set the bar up for a solitary meal. His mood was foul. He stared at the melting likeness of the grade-b star. Tonight for some reason it appeared particularly unappetising. Grumbling, he walked over to the life-sized statue and threw his jacket roughly over the face. 'Better.'

Michael pattered around the kitchen making the Martinis like his daddy taught him — lots of gin, then pass the vermouth bottle over the pitcher while saying 'Ave Maria.' Nice and dry. He sat at the bar sipping his drink and eyeing the shrouded statue.

The microwave beeped. He jammed his thumb against a button on the wall. The metal prosthesis, remnants from a movie appropriately named *The Hook*, opened to release the towel. He pulled the cartons from the microwave.

Michael ate in silence, watching as one of a myriad of television cops chased some anonymous cloned criminal through a nameless city. The shadows in the room danced in eerie ecstasy as the images of violence and destruction flashed on the screen. He found himself cheering when one actor blasted another to kingdom come. After supper, he removed his jacket from the statue. The molten face grimaced at him, the arms were upraised, beckoning. Stringy flesh dripped from bright red muscle.

Michael growled. 'Fuck you too.'

Davelini climbed the stairs to his room, undressed, turned on the television and collapsed into bed. As he did so, the door to the hall closet creaked open. The dismembered hand clawed at the darkness. In the studio, the imp — with a whirl and whisper of pulleys and gears — turned to face the living room.

Davelini woke to television static and the feeling of soft fur rubbing his scrotum. Ming purred happily between his legs. He reached down to pet her. Though half asleep, he was vaguely aware of a feeling of disquiet. He waited expectantly. The house was quiet. He

**"The shadows in the room danced in eerie ecstasy as the images of violence and destruction flashed on the screen"**

**"Stringy  
flesh dripped  
from bright  
red muscle"**

chuckled as Ming shifted positions: it tickled.

Michael got up and stretched. His clothes lay in a heap on the floor; they would wait until tomorrow. He went into the bathroom, but made a diversion from his route when he noticed the open closet door. He closed it and went to turn out the light. With the house secure and nature's call relieved, he went upstairs.

When he reached the second floor, he stopped at the head of the stairs, hearing the shift of tumblers and the soft click of the latch. He turned and watched the closet door open. He paused and thought for a moment. 'Screw it,' he muttered and returned to bed.

Later he was roused from a dream where movie monsters chased him through a sterile white maze. THUD! His body was drenched in sweat and he gasped frantically for air. The room closed in around him. Images from his dream haunted him, taunting him, so he didn't notice the soft persistent skitter which came from the attic. He reached for the lamp. Light flooded the room, and the walls receded. Michael lay blinking owlishly, trying to catch his breath.

Then he became aware of scraping noises over his head. Damn, he thought, rats. He would have to call the exterminator in the morning.

Ming strolled idly across his chest and sat down. 'Look, girl, don't you think it's about time you earned your keep? Go upstairs and chase those things.' Unimpressed at this suggestion, she proceeded to clean herself.

'Hell, even Sylvester is more useful than you. He never catches Tweetie, but at least he tries. What do you have to say for yourself?'

He heard another resonant bang coming from downstairs. It sounded like a door slamming shut. He looked at the cat quizzically. Ming continued to bathe, delicately lifting a paw to lick it and run it over an ear. 'Well, I can't blame you for that noise, can I?'



The chirping of the digital alarm woke him the next day. The sky was tinted the sombre morning grey of a mid-autumn dawn. Michael batted at the alarm clock; he was grateful, however, for the time change which made the morning dimly light.

When he felt for the light switch, he met with a surprise. The lamp was facing him: but he always had the lamp positioned so that the switch was towards him. It had been in the proper position when he turned it off last night after the dream, he was sure of it. Somehow it had turned to stare at him with its lidless eyes. He shuddered.

Shaking his head, he got out of bed. Feeling refreshed, despite his interrupted night's sleep, he went downstairs to start the coffee. While he waited for it to brew, he wandered into the studio, promptly bumping his hip on the table. Cursing quietly, he surveyed the room.

He was manic about his studio, and his obsession had caused more than one argument with the cleaning lady. Unless every piece was put back in precisely the same place, he spent the week barking his shins and tripping over wiring and cords. Eventually he marked the position of each item with tape so his housekeeper would know exactly where to return everything. The system had worked and was certainly easier than finding a new housekeeper — until now.

He looked around the room, and noticed that the table had moved slightly, the tape was visible. The imp had moved too. It now faced the living room, and seemed to have inched closer to the edge of its stand. Then he realised with a shock that the hand which had snapped shut last night — indicating some kind of malfunction — was open.

Puzzled, Davelini turned and left the room. He must still be dreaming. A cup of coffee would wake him up. He grabbed a mug to fill it, but his hand shook and the coffee splashed onto the counter. He put the pot down and held his right hand with his left to control the shaking.

Using, he reached for the towel, pressing the button to release the



hook. The talons opened. He grasped the towel firmly, but as he did so the hook began to open and close convulsively, shredding the towel. He yanked his hand away and the torn towel fluttered limply onto the counter. Michael began to shake again. Maybe it was time to get rid of this shit.

'Come on,' he said to himself aloud. 'You're getting jumpy.' His voice echoed hollowly in the empty kitchen.

Swearing under his breath, he went into the living room. The closet door which he had shut last night was open. The house must be settling. He'd get the hinge looked at; this thought reminded him that he needed to call the exterminator. He checked the clock that sat next to the mummy's hand. Seven a.m. Too early to call anyone.

Michael went to close the closet door, but when he looked inside his eyes widened in shock and his heart thundered wildly in his chest. The hands, all of them, were closed into fists. He slammed the door and leaned against it.

Get a grip on yourself, he thought. He was letting his imagination run away with him. All he had to do was open the door and the hands would be open again, groping the darkness. All he had to do... but he couldn't force himself to open it. Instead he walked into the living room and seated himself on the couch. He tapped his chin with his index finger and chewed on his lip.

Soon it'd be Halloween, a combined wedding and seasonal bash. Getting married on Halloween had been Carol's idea. Carol was a doll, Linda's exact opposite. Then the honeymoon, a much-needed vacation. He'd pack up his new wife and head for parts unknown. Fuck the director, fuck the producer. He was under too much pressure, that was all. What with all the projects going badly, it was no wonder that his eyes were playing tricks on him.

With a sigh, Michael got up and headed for the bathroom. He was sitting looking at last month's issue of *Playboy* when he saw a movement out of the corner of his eye. His bowels turned to water as he watched 'the hand' creeping

slowly down the wall. Michael laughed weakly. Thank God he had been sitting on the pot. Obviously the director hadn't been so positioned. For the first time since, he could feel a little sympathy for those people who had been caught unawares last Halloween. Maybe he had gone a little too far. It had seemed funny at the time, not so funny now.

Michael wondered how the hand had escaped from the attic and who had put it up again. After last year's party, he'd tucked it neatly away in a box. Yet there it was. Michael dressed quickly, eager to get out of the house. Someone was having a good laugh at his expense. He was decidedly spooked.

He picked up his clothes from the floor. Yesterday's shirt dangled limply from his hands. He felt his heart jump into his throat. His clothes — like the towel — were shredded. 'Ming?' he belatedly. 'Did you do this?'

The walls sprang to life, and he could hear a scratching noise coming from within them. Rats. It was time to get out of here.

Davelini went into the studio and grabbed the imp. As he picked it up, crimson dye seeped out of its mouth and dribbled all over his pants. He slammed it down on the table.

'Jesus Christ!'

He would have to change. 'Like hell I will.' He picked

up the mechanism again, placing it roughly under his arm. The metal gears stuck into his side. He growled and repositioned it. Somehow it seemed appropriate — after the way things had gone this morning — that he should arrive at the shop with blood, even if it was fake, all over his clothes.

It was a bitch of a day, worse than he had expected. The producer and director jumped on Michael as soon as he walked in the door. Their anger was further fuelled by them both being possessed of a nasty hangover. Two pairs of bloodshot eyes glared at him. He glared back.

The technician was a nervous wreck. It was obvious that he had worked late last night and had come in early this

**"It was a bitch of a day, worse than he had expected"**

morning. The producer and director must have descended on him - the moment he arrived. Michael led them away to let the man work. The guy was a electronic genius, but fuzzy-brained and sensitive. Michael didn't particularly like the technician's prima donna attitude, but he knew Tom would get the job done — he was the best in the business.

**D**avelini spent three hours closeted with the director and the producer while they hurled complaints and grievances at him. He matched them grievance for grievance, expletive for expletive. They almost came to blows, but were interrupted by the electrician's delighted yell. When they ran to see what had happened they found him jumping up and down in front of the mechanised monster; it was doing precisely what it was supposed to — drool, howl and bleed — on cue.

The director clapped the producer on the back. 'You see, I told you we'd fix it.'

Michael bit back a scathing comment and suggested that the two men leave so they could make sure all the problems were resolved. Then he brought in the imp and watched as the electrician poked and prodded the beast, checking wiring and circuits. But after two hours of exhaustive examination, he could find nothing wrong.

'Damn it, Tom. I tell you, the hand was opening and closing by itself. Look at this.' He pointed to the red stains on his slacks. 'This happened when I picked it up this morning.'

'Are you sure you didn't activate the mechanism by mistake?'

'I'm sure.'

'The stain will wash out.'

'Just fix it,' said Michael tersely. 'Look it over again. I don't care if you have to tear the goddam thing apart piece by piece and put it back together again. I want that fucking thing working by tonight. I'll stay out of your hair.'

Edict delivered, Davelini turned his back and walked away. The technician flipped him the bird.

**H**ands full, Michael kicked the front door of his house open; it banged into the open closet door. He winced, suddenly remembering the unmade calls. 'Son of a bitch.'

Without looking inside, he slammed the closet shut and headed for the bar. The shredded towel lay on the counter, a mute reminder of that morning's trials. He pushed it aside, fixed himself a double and proceeded to get drunk.

He ate no dinner; it would interfere with his absorption of alcohol. Neither did he make any attempt to pick up the towel, the clothes or any of the debris left from the morning, although he knew he should. Tomorrow was Halloween and the party. God was it really tomorrow? He wondered idly where Ming was and decided it was better for her if she hid. With the mood he was in, it would be too tempting to slap her around.

He carried the pitcher into the living room, turned on the night lighting and sat in the blood red glow and pooled spots, downing one drink after another. Soon he had a nice buzz on.

Davelini ignored the slithering sounds that came from above him and from within the walls, and glared at the closet as it swung open of its own accord. When the death-mask winked at him and the skeletal fingers on the statue bent to point at him, he dismissed it as delirium tremans.

Michael toasted the figure and chuckled, mumbling into the glass: 'Up yours, asshole!'

Rather than let his mind run away with him, he decided to go check out the schematics for the imp. He debated whether to get it out of the car. No, it was too late to do any real work. But maybe the circuit drawings would reveal where the original problem had arisen.

He got unsteadily to his feet and staggered into the studio. Without turning on the overhead light he walked around the workbench. His foot hit something soft. He slipped and almost fell.

Angrily he reached for the desk lamp. 'Ming, you are a pain. Aren't tearing up

**"The teeth  
sank into the  
soft flesh of  
his palm"**



my clothes and knocking things over at night enough? Can't you at least stay out from under foot?"

He swung around to grab the cat, only to stumble backwards and gasp. Ming was a nothing more than a pile of tan and brown fur. Michael squatted down. The alcohol sloshed and churned in his empty stomach. He put his hand over his mouth, and ran for the bathroom. Her windpipe had been ripped out.

**H**e retched, ignoring the hand as it began its slow clawing descent. His head spun. He knew he should go back and clean up the studio, find a box for Ming; but he couldn't face it. He scarcely had the strength left to climb the stairs. It would wait until tomorrow.

Michael crawled into bed and passed out while the house awakened. The rattling in the attic grew more pronounced. The statue in the living room moved ever so slightly, and the decapitated head that functioned as a lamp turned to look at him as he slept.

Outside, the car door swung open and the imp climbed down from his perch on the front seat. Inside the closet, one thump followed another as the hands fell from their places on the wall. The skittering in the attic became loud bumps intermixed with a soft slithering. In the kitchen, the hook opened and closed — snapping at the air. It disengaged itself from the wall and fell clattering into the sink.

The clock in the hall chimed twelve. The trap-door to the attic swung down and the ladder descended with a loud bang. Michael fought his way back to consciousness. He listened. Thump, thump, bang, clatter, clatter. He could hear something moving on the stairs outside his door. Thump, thump, bang, clatter, clatter.

The doorknob rattled, spinning crazily. Davelini's head throbbed, dully keeping time with the racket in the hall. He felt along the bedside table, reaching for the lamp. His fingers searched for the switch, but instead he found the mouth and his hand slipped between the teeth. He winced and started to sit up. The teeth sank into the soft flesh of his

palm.

He screamed, and the door swung open. The once lifeless statue stepped into his room followed by a myriad of monsters and demons. Arms slid along the floor like snakes. The mummy's hand crawled through the door while the hook came clattering across the floor and onto the bed. Michael shrieked again, a strangled animal sound as he backed against the wall.

**T**he alarm chirped endlessly, waiting to be silenced. Afternoon sun flooded into the bedroom, falling across the bed and Michael's supine form. Miniature goblins and ghosts moved along the street accompanied by bored mothers. The doorbell rang to the chorus of 'Trick or Treat', and the alarm chattered on. No hand would still it, for the hand that might have was caught in the grinning demon mouth.

Cream-coloured sheets were splashed red and brown. Two hooves attached to wires, pullies and gears stretched across Davelini's unmoving torso. The imp stared blindly at the light. Red fluid oozed from sharp teeth in a grinning mouth; its claw grasped its creator's windpipe.

Various body parts littered the room. A detached prosthetic hook was imbedded in Michael's groin. Hands clutched limp appendages.

The door opened. A young man with a cherubic face appeared; he was accompanied by a middle-aged woman. She recoiled in horror at the sight. 'Christ, Mike, don't you think that's overkill?'

She pointed towards the bed, and handed the boy a large electrical black box. Then she walked across to where Davelini lay and bent over, her arm extended as if to touch him.

'Mother!' the young man hissed.

The woman turned, but not before she had watched the hook detach itself from Michael's crotch. She withdrew her hand and retreated towards the door.

'Let's get the hell out of here.'

Linda Davelini walked out through the doorway. Over her shoulder, she quipped to the corpse: 'Happy Halloween, dear.'



**JESSICA PALMER** has written as a journalist for several US publications. She has published eight textbooks in the States, Canada, the UK and France about radioactive materials and explosives handling. Her first novel, *Dark Lullaby*, will be published by Pocket Books this year.

**"Red fluid oozed from sharp teeth in a grinning mouth"**

# FEAR

## Reviews

### OFF THE SHELF

Arthur C Clarke Award judge and regular FEAR critic David V Barrett takes a look at the shortlist for this most prestigious of British SF novel prizes.

**T**hey may not be as prestigious as the Booker and the Whitbread, but the various SF and fantasy awards are important to the genre, and a good indication of what's worth reading. The best known awards, the Hugo and Nebula, are often very American-influenced, but in this country we have British Fantasy Awards, which tend towards horror, the British Science Fiction Awards, which include SF and fantasy, and the Arthur C Clarke Award for the best SF novel published in the UK in the previous year, which, so far as I know, is the only one of the three to have a money prize (£1000) as well as a trophy.

As one of the judges of this year's Arthur C Clarke Award, (the others are author Mary Gentle, editor and owner of Murder One bookshop Maxim Jakubowski, and BSFA coordinator Maureen Porter), I thought I'd spend this month's column running through the shortlist.

There are some excellent books here; we'll be choosing the winner at London's Groucho Club on March 8, and it could be any of them. I'll go through them in alphabetical order of the authors names, and try not to show any partiality; for those I've reviewed recently in FEAR I'll try not to repeat myself too much.

Jonathan Carroll's *A Child Across the Sky* (Legend) shares some characters with his earlier books *Bones of the Moon* and *Sleeping in Flame*. Philip Strayhorn makes

horror films; he sends some videos to his friend Weber Gregston, then kills himself. But each time Gregston plays the tapes they relay messages from Strayhorn, and Gregston eventually realises that he has to remake Strayhorn's final film to stop the evil portrayed in it from being released in reality. The novel contains perhaps Carroll's strangest character: Pinsleepe, a child who is pregnant with her own mother, who is simultaneously pregnant with her. Reality and fantasy overlap and merge. Strange, disturbing, haunting.

Lisa Goldstein's *A Mask For the General* (Legend) is set in a near future California, under the rule of the General. One group of dissidents wear masks, which express the personality of the animal spirit within them: a dog, a bird, a spider, a lion, an otter. But in a police state it's unwise to show you're a free-thinker; you might end up in a prison camp. Mask-wearers feel differently when they wear their masks; it's as if the personality of the animal is working its way through them. What would happen if somehow the General could be persuaded to wear the black crow mask which mask-maker Layla has crafted for him? Mystical and thought-provoking.

Ian McDonald's *Desolation Road* (Bantam) is a weird and wonderful breathless romp through a crazy town in the Martian desert, peopled with an eclectic selection of odd inhabitants with even odder names. Persis Tatterdemalion, for instance, a one-woman flying circus, who is married to identical triplets; Dr Alimantando, the town's

founder and a wacky inventor, who is led there by a real little green man; the Babooshka, an old grandmother who simply wants to grow her own child, in a jar; and a couple of dozen other equally oddball characters. Great fun if you can stand the pace. (Coming soon in FEAR: an Ian McDonald interview).

### PAUL RESNICK, GEOFF RYMAN, DAVID ZINDELL

Paul Resnick's *Ivory* (Legend) tells of the hunt for the tusks of the Kilimanjaro elephant, which was killed in 1898, nearly 4,500 years ago. This book, despite its historical basis, is true space opera; the episodes which make up the novel include interplanetary pirates, crooks and gamblers, with a few aliens thrown in for good measure. It's a detective story, in which the 'detective', an expert on big game trophies, becomes as obsessed with the search as his client, who is the very last of the Maasai tribe. Intriguing, moving and fun.

Geoff Ryman's *The Child Garden* (Unwin) is the story of a social misfit in a society where people, from childhood, get their education from viruses; Milena is immune to them, and has to learn new subjects the hard way. Like many other social oddities through the ages, Milena becomes an actress, then a producer, eventually staging a worldwide holographic production beamed from space. The book is an exploration of her character, of her coming to terms with her own uneasy personality, of her search for her own identity in a near future London, which is more disturbing in its similarities than its differences. Evocative and beautifully written.

Finally (alphabetically), comes David Zindell's *Nevertiness* (Grafton), a story of space exploration and the search for the meaning of life. Mallory Ringess is a young, arrogant, space pilot who dares to go where none have gone before and lived to tell the tale. Pilots are mathematicians and plot their courses (with the help of

their computers) by visualising as jewel-like structures the formulae and algorithms they need to slide through windows in space. A very detailed and – a rare thing indeed – a poetically written hard science fiction novel.

There you have them: seven outstanding books, only one of which can win the Arthur C Clarke Award, but all of them a damn good read, proving that high quality, stimulating, original SF and fantasy is still being written.

ON EARTH AND IN SPACE – BEAMRIDERS CAN STOP TIME



### BEAMRIDERS

Martin Caidin is best known for creating Steve Austin, 'The Six Million Dollar Man', in his 1972 novel *Cyborg*. A pilot and former consultant to the US aviation authorities, his book was an above-average techno-thriller. *Beamriders* (Fan, paperback, £3.99) is his latest, and the hi-tech time is a laser which acts like the transporter in *Star Trek*. Set in the present day, the laser is never really convincing, but it is by far the most interesting thing in this disappointing novel.

The core of the story is the development and funding (by suitably Byzantine means) of the laser. Apart from the odd intriguing description of the laser technically, this is very dull stuff. The plot is mainly developed by characters exchanging large paragraphs of political/technical info. In a weak attempt to liven them up, most of these conversations take the shape of

arguments, with each paragraph prefaced by a real or joshing insult.

Characterisation is even worse, the athletes testing out the transporter – beamriders – seem mere sketches of characters intended for the bland format of a TV series. Their belief in non-lethal weaponry is as convincing as the *A-Team's* miraculous inability to kill anyone with the arsenal of a small army. Also, the prose seems not to have been properly checked. During one battle at least three people are described as falling 'as if hit by a truck' in as many pages.

In fact, the publishers seem not to have read the book at all. The PR and blurb on the back claim the beamriders are sent 'defusing (?) atomic terrorists' (an incident missing from my copy), rescuing a US scientist (repeatedly described as British in the text) and promise they 'were to embark' on a mission to the Moon. A mission which they start to plan on pages 409-411, the last pages in the book!

Stuart Wynne

## THE WITLING

First published in 1976, this book by Vernor Vinge (Pan, paperback, £3.99) is one of the last genre releases under the old Pan imprint and, despite having one of the most revolting covers I've ever seen, the story is strong and has a strong message.

It begins when a spaceship crash-lands on the planet Gira where the rulers possess psychic powers and their slaves, called Witlings, do not. The newly arrived crash survivors do not, of course, possess psychic powers and the rulers of Gira quickly become worried when they discover that these Witlings can travel through space.

Fortunately, these Earthlings survive because the current ruler is sympathetic to their cause. He is in love with the failed expedition's least possible member, and that can only mean trouble.

This book has not aged with the passing of fifteen years because it concentrates on characters and how they cope with their psyches rather than by relying on high tech machines. As such it fits in with much of today's science fiction and, with the publication of some of Vinge's other titles, it looks as if this writer could once again be in vogue.

Bob Rachin

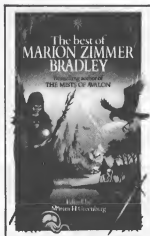
## THE BEST OF MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY

Best known for her Darkover novels, Marion Bradley is also an accomplished writer of short stories. Martin H Greenberg, well

known for editing the *Batman* and *Joker* short story anthologies, has collected fifteen of the best Bradley stories that roam through space and time, science fiction and fantasy. Several of the stories include references to her other works, gathering a loose fence around those concepts that belong in her universe.

The first story *Centaurus* *Changeling*, is a novella that, despite its geographic base in the Darkovan colonies, echoes fears closer to home, of population explosion, genetic mutation and the familiar 'love' feelings that mothers have for their babies. After all, one of the worst fears a woman can have is for her unborn child, and as such this story accomplishes one of the goals of SF, to foreshadow and discuss future events in startling – and entertaining – ways.

The other fourteen tales foreshadow similar earthly concerns. *The Climbing Wave* starts as a shipload of aliens returns to earth to discover and cope with changes in lifestyle and population. *Exiles of Tomorrow* warns of the erratic growth of liberalism in society. *Death Between the Stars* echoes our enlightened concerns over racism and our abandonment of commonsense in order to please everyone, while *Bird of Prey*, The



*Wind People, The Wild One and Day of the Butterflies* take uneasy glances at childhood.

Back to space flight with *Hero's Moon, The Engine and Secret of the Blue Star*, then the book finishes familiarly on Darkover with two tales of honour, *To Keep the Oath* and *Elbow Room*.

Greenberg has done a marvellous job with this tribute to a great SF writer. The book is structured chronologically, starting in 1954 and rounding off in 1988. It is the consummate Bradley fan's collectors' piece and an ideal introduction for those

who have never read her novels before.  
John Gilbert

## ROBERT SILVERBERG'S MAJIPOOR REVOLT IN MAJIPOOR

FEAR's Matt Costello provides the first in a series of solo role-playing game books which take us their background the world of Robert Silverberg's *Majipoor*.

The story is simple enough. Lord Valentine's son has been kidnapped and his faithful lieutenant Farras must retrieve him, battling with murderers, assassins and court intrigue to defeat the hidden council of the Metamorph Rivurians. His only travelling companion is a psychic called Cyrene, not much of an advantage when he has to find the kid in 30 days or less.

This book is like most solo adventure books in that you create a character and select a series of numbered adventure texts using dice or a special number generation table. It is, however, unusual because Costello's adequately written book matches the play level of *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*. There's also an introductory chapter by Robert Silverberg which, for *Majipoor* fans, should be a worthwhile read even if they don't like role-playing.  
Mark Westerby

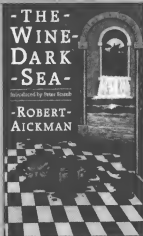
## FIGHTING CONVENTION

### THE WINE-DARK SEA

Robert Aickman  
Publisher Mandarin  
Format PB, £3.99  
Category Dark fantasy

Robert Aickman was a much underestimated master of 'dark fantasy' a tag which – like 'horror' – he hated. His work fights convention and so perhaps it's not surprising that the only other major collection of his work appearing in the past two years is *Cold Hand in Mine* from Robinson Publishing. The monsters in this book are unlike any you've ever seen, and yet you may well have experienced them: the chilling dread of insomnia from *Into the Wood*, the terrifying illusion of unrequited love in *Never Visit Venice*, and the claustrophobic dread of events beyond your control in *Trains*. I do not single out these stories as the collection's best, they are all of a high quality, but rather as examples of the way in which Aickman hints at the abnormalities residing in life.

Peter Straub is the ideal writer of an introduction to this book. He too fights convention with well-written dark tales, and obviously appreciates Aickman's insights. Rather than going for the throat,



Aickman goes for the heart, but it is his desire to squeeze rather than fondle that puts him in the league of dark romantic fiction.

I doubt that many contemporary horror readers will pick this book up out of choice, but the publisher has boxed clever by packaging it in one of the most inventive covers I have seen for some time. It will no doubt foster a bigger readership and I too would suggest that you read Aickman for a picture of what dark fantasy – for want of a better term – is all about.  
John Gilbert

## PSYCHO HOUSE

I suspect that Robert Bloch's new novel (Tor, hardback, \$16.95) was written more out of a sense of tradition than literary worth. So shall it sell.

As one of Bloch's fans, I must admit to a wedge of ill-disguised delight when this book was dropped onto my desk. I did not offer it to someone else to review but kept it as a winter read. It is difficult to hide disappointment when you've been keyed up to read something special. After all, this is the second official sequel to Bloch's *Psycho*, the tale of mother-fixed Norman Bates, which helped to build Alfred Hitchcock's filmmaking reputation. But it offers nothing new; in fact it reads as if this thriller writer has been off the planet for the past fifteen years.

Norman Bates it dead and Fairvale is trying to forget the few but awful crimes he perpetrated. A local land developer has other plans, and builds a replica of the Bates motel, furnished with working shower and Mother dunny in the basement.

Before the cement is dry the dummy vanishes and a young girl is stabbed to death on the premises. Investigative reporter

Amelia Haines sees a story in all of this, but the townsfolk don't want to talk about the old or new murders and, worse still, she could become a victim before she finds the killer.

*Psycho House* is a drab, pointless excursion behind enemy lines only to find that the foe's entire army has deserted. Robert Bloch is undoubtedly a master of horror, but that title relies on his older works and not a novel such as this which, though crisply written, denies current conventions and takes a decidedly backward step into a twilight zone of yesteryear. John Gilbert

## THE NIGHT OF THE MOONBOW

A name from the past: Thomas Tryon is well known for his groundbreaking supernatural novel *The Other* and the longer *Harvest Home*, which was made into a television mini-series starring Bette Davis. His new novel (Hodder and Stoughton, hardback, £13.95) follows in the tradition of those two novels but owes more to *Lord of the Flies* than anything overtly in the horror genre.

It is set in 1938 and begins when the boys at a summer Bible camp discover that the husky, athletic jock they had hoped would arrive

to complement their numbers is not going to turn up. Instead they are more than distressed to learn that his replacement is a sickly Jewish boy called Leo 'Wacko' Joaquin.

Disappointment turns to rage as Leo continually proves his uselessness at any type of game or physical pursuit. Rage soon turns to abuse, and the homesick boy, naturally, tries to find some way to fight back. The results, which



affect the whole camp, are startling and show that Tryon has lost none of his edge for terror during the years between his last supernatural thriller and this one.

Gorgeously written and well-illustrated with maps of the

story's surrounding countryside, it is an unusual book in today's horror climate, gleaming with romanticism rather than glaring with immediate brutal violence. It is a novel which takes the children of the damned, created by authors such as John Saul, and gives them new life. It is, quite simply, a pleasurable read, a welcome return.

John Gilbert

## RAIN

Stephen Gallagher  
Publisher New English Library  
Format HB, £12.95  
Category Thriller

Lucy Ashdown's sister, Christine, is dead: mown down by a car in an apparently senseless accident. But, for Lucy, death is not an end. She must find the hit-and-run killer and bring him to justice.

Things aren't quite so simple, though; they never are in a Stephen Gallagher novel. As Lucy goes after Christine's killer – retracing her steps, trying to find anyone who saw her on the road between London and her home up north – her father asks Joe Lucas, a cop and distant family friend, to track her down and bring her back.

Lucy evades him several times

## THE NEW FORCE



during her travels to London, where she gets her sister's old job backstage at a grubby skin show, but he constantly dogs her. In one encounter, she escapes on a hospital trolley bound for the morgue. In another she is handcuffed to a café table while Joe goes for the car which will take her back to her father. She escapes them all, but the grand finale, by which time most of the book's protagonists have bitten the

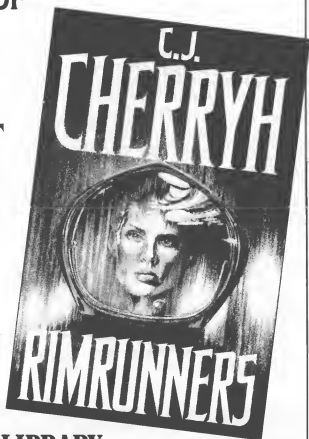
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# WIDENING YOUR HORIZONS

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## MYSTERY

Peter Straub

Publisher Grafton

Format HB, £13.95

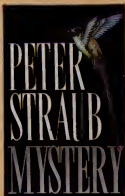
Category Mystery/thriller

**H**e started as a supernatural horror writer with bestsellers such as *Ghost Story*, *Julia* and *Shadowland*, but in recent times Peter Straub has shown that he is equally adept when jazzing with any genre.

In some respects, *Mystery* is a sequel to his thriller *Koko*, the tale of a strange vendetta operating within a group of Vietnam survivors. The locale, the small Caribbean island of Mill Walk (possibly an in joke reference to Milwaukee, Straub's home town), appears to be linked with aspects of the *Koko* case, ranging from the subtle symbolism evoked by the mention of Blue Rose and the bald recounting of the grisly saga by character, Lamont von Heilitz.

Lamont, a strangely-dressed old man, is a famous detective – The Shadow – known by all, though little spoken of. Most people believe that his nickname grew from a radio sleuth, but others, including a young man called Tom Passmore, think the reverse may be true. His most famous case involved the solution of the murder of a woman at a lakeside retreat for the island's rich family. But Tom comes to believe that The Shadow may have come to the wrong conclusions and, subtly prompted by the great man, he attempts to reinvestigate.

However, those people nearest the case start to die in the most



chilling of circumstances and the rich families originally involved in the murder grow restless as he begins to discover the truth. It's a truth that will change the island's power structure, reveal a corrupt police force, and give young hero Tom Passmore a shock when, as a result of the case, he discovers his true identity and the monsters with whom he has been living since his birth.

*Mystery* is initially confusing and complex but ultimately transforms into a triumphant detective thriller, spiced by Straub's addictive style. It belongs to several genres and to none, and it contains short, unexplained, supernatural interludes which show that this author hasn't abandoned the roots that threw up *Ghost Story*. But Straub also indicates that he, like Stephen King, can write outside genres, surprising publishers, reviewers and audience with each new work. This one is a masterpiece of plotting – and that's no mystery at all.

John Gilbert



London dust, forces her into a confrontation not only with Joe but also with her sister's ghostly memory and the deadly killer who wants to murder again to keep his insane crimes quiet.

An obvious follow-on from

Gallagher's last novel, *Down River*, *Rain* does, however, take his style one step further, showing that he can effectively portray a substantial female character. He is, admittedly, helped by being forced to give Lucy a strong disposition in order to survive in London but, nevertheless, *Rain* shows a certain insight which writers such as Stephen King have never been comfortable with.

John Gilbert

## THE ASCENSION FACTOR

The untimely death of *Dune* author Frank Herbert seemed to put an end to his rumping SF tales, but as with other authors, including H P Lovecraft and Charles Dickens, someone has come along to finish that last

THE FINAL VOLUME IN THE PANDORA TRILOGY

# FRANK HERBERT

AUTHOR OF DUNE / & BILL RANSOM  
THE ASCENSION FACTOR



book. Bill Ransom co-author with Herbert on *The Jesus Incident* is that someone.

*The Ascension Factor* (Orbit, paperback, £3.99), the final part of the Pandora trilogy, was plotted and peopled by Herbert who died before the book could be written. It's the story of Pandora, a planet covered by water, just as Dune was covered by desert. The colonists have been able to reclaim land from the sea using buffers of kelp to keep water from destroying their settlements. The planet is ruled by an autocratic clone called The Director, who punishes transgressors with starvation and will not tolerate resistance. Pandora's only hope is Crista Galli (obviously rooted in the names Christ and Galilee)

COMING

IN  
APRIL  
1990



who is believed to be the child of God. She must once and for all destroy The Director's grip on the planet.

Although one detects the general absence of Herbert's style, his story sense is there, kept alive by a good writer, friend and, no doubt, fan. It makes you wonder if there are more unfinished Herbert manuscripts. I certainly hope so.  
Mark Westerby

## A FLOW OF SOULS

### THE RAINBOW GATE

Freda Warrington  
Publisher New English Library  
Format HB, £13.95  
Category Fantasy

Leaving her Blackbird series well behind, Freda Warrington examines the questions posed by life after death and reincarnation by postulating a parallel world. Sounds simple, and hopeful, but *The Rainbow Gate* is neither.

We start in reality where Helen is visited by Rianna, a friend from a childhood dominated by strange, half-remembered events around the woods of Bradgate Park. Strange things occur when Rianna begins to make unusual dolls for Helen's craft shop. Helen has an unpleasant encounter in the woods and the people who buy the dolls, including her ex-husband, begins to die.

Helen eventually crosses over to another world which at first seems pleasant but soon she learns that it is inhabited not only by a life loving race but also by a morbid culture that wants to stop doll production. These dolls represent a link between the two



worlds and, if you own one when you die, you get to cross into another world.

The death worshippers want to stop this trade so that everyone goes to a normal death. This sentiment is shared by the gatekeeper between worlds - Black Annis wants a rest from the continual flow of souls through her portals. Helen is the key, and in a sombre finale she solves but a few of the problems posed in the novel.

Warrington's latest creation is a bittersweet fantasy where alternate reality does not necessarily provide a better world or answer all questions. It is salty brew of true insight and pure entertainment.

John Gilbert

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# CRUISE CUTS OUT OF BURTON BLOCKBUSTER

Tom Cruise finds the prospect of appearing in Tim Burton's new movie suddenly resistible, SF shocker *The Postman* makes it to the biggie, *Watchers* gets a sequel, and Chucky returns in *Child's Play 2*. FEAR's John Glenday finds the words.

**T**he Addams Family are to be resuscitated later this year for a big screen outing. The big budget comedy will be brought back to life by *Ghostbuster* director Ivan Reitman, who also turned Arnold Schwarzenegger into a comedian for *Twins*. The cast includes Kevin Kline, Oscar winner for *A Fish Called Wanda*, and the delectable Cher who is playing Morticia, the family vamp. I have no doubts that she will give Elvira a run for her money! The film is due out in the US this summer, meaning a Christmas release in the UK. Tim Burton is probably going to have his diary full this year as his new project, *Edward*

cast in the role. Meanwhile, Depp will get his first movie exposure in John Waters' film, *Cry Baby*.

The spawn of Burton's last movie may be on hold for a while as Michael Keaton is working on a non-genre project. It's called *Mr Jones* and is a love story (yekl).

## NUCLEAR STAND

The home of the Bat, Warner Brothers, also have another project in mind for Mr Keaton. Entitled *The Postman*, it is based on a novel by SF author David Brin. The story is that of a loner who wanders the wasteland in a post-apocalyptic world, and finds a discarded mailman's jacket which he dons. In his continuing travels he becomes a symbol of hope for the isolated communities he comes across and undertakes to deliver letters to lost loved ones. Now Keaton has proved that he can be serious actor, I think that this would be a worthwhile project. As Steven King's *The Stand* looks set for production within the next few years (see Issue 13) it looks as if the post-nuclear environment is going to be occupied by filmmakers in the 1990s.

As for a producer for the next *Batman* film, I speculate that Joel Silver will fill the Guber and Peters boots, since they recently divorced themselves from Warners. Silver has a tried and trusted cv with *Predator 1* and *2*, *Die Hard 1* and *2*, *Lethal Weapon*... you get the picture. While on the subject of Silver, it is worth mentioning that he recently added the character of Rogue Trooper, from *2000AD*, to his catalogue of development projects.

Last piece on *Batman*; since Frank Miller recently won his film spurs on *Robocop 2* (nice to see *Red Dragon*, Tom Noonan, playing the metal bad guy), it is only fair that he should be given

a crack at the new screenplay.

I said no more *Batman*, but I didn't say we wouldn't talk about *Alien 3* for a change. It has been announced that David N Twotly has drafted a new screenplay and it appears that William Gibson's is on the back burner. Twotly is a comparatively new name, but another of his screenplays is to be filmed in March. *The Grand Tour* is an SF story, based on a novella by Henry Cuttner and C I Moore and stars Richard Gere. Twotly also has a third screenplay under consideration called *Fugitive*.

*Child's Play 2* is filming with the luxury of a \$12 million budget. There are no big names in the cast, so it looks as if the FX will play a large part in the new movie. Chucky is revived by Kevin Yagher once again. Destined for an autumn '90

release in the US, with a novelisation written by FEAR's Matthew Costello, UK viewers will see it in early '91.

## KOONTZ' NIGHT-MARE

After seeing his novel butchered, I'm certain Dean R Koontz will want to ignore the sequel to *Watchers*, *Watchers 2: The Outsider* is heading our way with *The Beastmaster* himself, Marc Singer, tracking down the Oxcom monster in the guise of a renegade marine. Helping him will be the dog called Einstein and Tracy Scoggins as the love interest. Why was it made? Good question. Roger Corman purchased the rights to the original novel but was offered a lucrative sum to sell them again. Being the shrewd businessman we all know and love, Roger shrewdly kept the sequel rights in case the film was a runaway success, which it wasn't. But it made money on video. Enough, in fact, to make Roger sit up and take note.

Finally, I can't resist throwing a few stupid titles at you like *Quinta Roo*, *Sleepaway Camp 3: Teenage Wasteland* and *Croaked: Frog Monster From Hell*. I'm sure you don't need me to tell you that the latter is a Troma film.



Tim Burton

*Scissorhands*, is in development at Twentieth Century Fox. The story deals with a man suffering from an affliction that deforms his limbs into shapes that look like cutting implements. Tom Cruise was approached to play the lead in this *Elephant Man*-type film and, at first, said yes—but got cold feet after a few weeks. Burton wasted no time in finding a replacement, and Johnny Depp, star of Sky Television's *21 Jump Street*, was



\$12 million for Chucky

# ROMERO GOES APE

## MONKEYSHINES: AN EXPERIMENT IN FEAR

**Starring:** John Beghe, John Pankow, Kate McNeil, Boo  
**Director** George A. Romero  
**Distributor** Rank  
**Cert** 18

An unexpected, but nonetheless brilliant, offering from the man who brought zombie movies to the masses. It is quite unusual for a well-written novel to be rewritten by a filmmaker, put back together, and cast into an equally entertaining film. However, I think that this subtle restructuring of the story was necessary to suit the personalities involved, the principals being Romero as scripter/director and Tom Savini as effects creator.

Romero is a great individualist who knows how to make films that work. His interpretation of Michael Stewart's novel won praise from the author in an interview we ran with him last year and, similarly, wins praise from me now.

The story is simple, the psychology fascinating. Allan



Mann, a star athlete, is hit by a car and crippled. His research scientist friend Geoffrey Fisher watches his Allan's girlfriend desert him for another man and determines that Mann will not be as helpless again as he was during his weeks of convalescence. He gives him Ella, a monkey injected with an experimental intelligence-enhancing drug and trained to carry out simple physical tasks at Allan's command.

Soon, however, Fisher sees signs that the capuchin monkey has some sort of psychic link with her master. His acquaintances, people who have recently offended him, suddenly begin to die and Fisher begins to believe that the monkey is carrying out the desires of Allan's hate-filled subconscious.

The finale of *Monkeyshines* is slightly preposterous, and involves a homicidal maniac running around Allan's home, but Romero creates hot tension right up to one of the biggest throwaway shocks of last year—created, of course, by Savini's most able hands.

*Monkeyshines* will not disappoint Romero fans, but those who cannot spend an afternoon without the appearance of a zombie onscreen should steer well clear. Me? Well, I won't be visiting any zoos or having my picture taken in front of a barrel organ outside the Tower of London for some time to come.  
John Gilbert

## THE KILL-OFF

**Starring:** Loretta Gross, Jackson Sims, Steve Monroe, Cathy Haase, Andrew Lee Barrett, Jorjan Fox, William Russell  
**Director** Maggie Greenwald  
**Distributor** Palace Pictures  
**Cert** 18

A small cast, diminutive although highly atmospheric locations and a quirky use of the camera go to make *The Kill-Off*. In fact, everything you need to turn a wildly perverse Jim Thompson book into a tightly worked, tense little film.

You know that death is in the air the moment you clap eyes on Luane, a bedridden hypochondriac who, with malicious glee and an almost psychic eye for things happening in her little town, destroys the reputations of those whom she believes have done her wrong.

The victims and potential murder suspects quickly fall in line. There's Pete, owner of a failing nightclub, who has been cheated out of money by giving it to the wicked gossip of the west before dying. He needs that money bad and will do anything to Luane in order to get it.

Then there's Ralph, Luane's youthful, simpleton husband, who falls in love with a stripper at Pete's bar and decides to strangle his own good lady. Then there's Rags, the bar's drunken tender, who is tormented by Luane for the death of his daughter, killed when he was drunk at the wheel of the family car.

But the most likely suspect for Luane's eventual shotgun death is Bobby, a young drugs dealer who seduces Pete's daughter with heroin because he can't raise an erection. A great number of these people end up dead at the end of the movie but, as you watch each fulfill their degrading life rituals, you eventually believe that such loss of life is necessary. There is not one likeable character in the whole movie, the situations portrayed are all downbeat and,



Jackson Sims and Andrew Lee Barrett in *The Kill-Off*

in the end, you almost feel happy when those bullets fly.

Unfortunately, despite Greenwald's often adroit handling of the subject matter, her efforts to achieve an almost *Dallas*-like 'who shot Luane?' are plodding in the extreme. The constant emphasis on who has a gun and who has access to one on occasion made my blood boil, and provoked me silently to urge them to get on with the storyline. The ponderous use of linking shots showing the telephone wires as Luane does her dirty

gossip business on the phone also made me want to scream.

*The Kill-Off* left me in a state of depression only equalled by my mood when I left the screening of David Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers*, but not with the same sense of exhilaration. As an admirer of Thompson's books, I must say that Greenwald's movie almost perfectly matches the mood of its progenitor. . . . But be warned - its effect on an audience is similar to that of a bullet in the brain.

John Gilbert

## RED SCORPION

**Starring:** Dolph Lundgren, M Emmet Walsh, Al White, T P McKenna, Carmen Argenziano, Alex Colon, Brian James, Ruben Nthodi  
**Director** Joseph Zito  
**Distributor** Vestron  
**Cert** 15, 101 mins  
**Rental**

Spetzna, a special combat branch of the Soviet army; 'our warrior elite, a very powerful and valuable tool . . . if he can be controlled.' Dolph Lundgren is Lieutenant Nikolai Rachenko, a Spetzna, predictably enough, and his mission in *Red Scorpion* is to assassinate Sundata, the leader of a Cuban guerrilla movement making a nuisance of itself, particularly to the Soviets.

The exact location of Sundata and his army is unknown, but as luck would have it, one of his warlords and favourite adviser, Kallunda, has been arrested and is being held at a military base in Mobaka. Dolph is posted there as 'technical adviser' and deliberately gets arrested in order to meet and befriend Kallunda. Together with Dewey, an American investigative reporter, they break out. Meeting with Soviet soldiers on the way (they are duly destroyed by Dolph in order to continue his pretence of being a deserter), Kallunda leads

## CYBORG

**Starring:** Jean Claude Van Damme, Deborah Richter, Vincent Klyn, Alex Daniels, Dayle Haddon, Blaise Loong  
**Director** Albert Pyun  
**Distributor** Pathe Video  
**Cert** 18, 80 mins  
**Rental**

It comes as some surprise that the lead character of *Cyborg*, Gibson Rickenbacker (Jean Claude Van Damme), isn't some *Robocop*-style man-machine cleaning up the streets of the future. Instead, the cyborg of the title is Pearl Prophet, a young woman (Dayle Haddon) who has gathered the data that will enable doctors to find a cure for a plague which is ravaging the decaying Earth.

Pearl has to get to Atlanta from New York and enlist the fists and flying feet of Gibson to help her. However, they don't even get past their alleyway meeting place; they're separated by the untimely interference of the *Flesh Pirates*, a gang of thugs led by the vile Fender Tremelo, and Pearl is kidnapped. Joining forces with damsel Nady Simmons (Deborah Richter), Gibson pursues Fender and Pearl across the country, vowing silent vengeance against the villain for past atrocities against his family.

What plot there is to this movie (and I've recounted most of it

## HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS

**Starring:** Rick Moranis, Matt Frewer, Marcia Strassman  
**Director** Joe Johnston  
**Distributor** Touchstone  
**Cert** PG

Take Richard Matheson's *Incredible Shrinking Man*, add gloopy teen humour and a wacky scientist/family man and you've got a sugary, sure-fire blockbuster that will put bums on seats in any cinema no matter which country the film's touring.

Rick Moranis is the wonderfully goofy mad husband and failed inventor. His latest gimmick is a raygun that supposedly shrinks objects, animals and humans. He just can't seem to get it to work.

One day while he's out one of

the kids next door socks a soft-ball through the window of the attic. The ball gets the gizmo working and pretty soon it's miniaturised Moranis' daughter and the two boys next door. A series of hilarious accidents takes them to the bottom of the garden, where they are prey to birds, ants, rain and mud, the family dog and other humans.

Meanwhile, Moranis is distraught at the loss of his kids and, in one of the funniest sequences in the movie, swings around on a circular washing line to ensure his feet don't mash his offspring as they battle their way back to the house.

The special effects provide a good balance to a wittily written script and the film leaves you with

a glow when you depart the cinema. The feeling of goodwill is further enhanced by the showing of a cartoon short featuring my current favourite cartoon creation, Roger Rabbit.

In *Tummy Trouble*, Roger is left to care for baby but, after a particularly vicious slapstick routine in which baby swallows a rattle, the little 'un is carted off to hospital. The Rabbit follows, ends up on the operating table and, after some assistance from his off-screen wife Jessica, gets baby back home just as mother arrives. As the characters walk off onto a real set aka *Who Framed . . .*, you feel assured that Roger has another success on his hands.

John Gilbert



Dolph's revenge in *Red Scorpion*

them to the guerrillas . . . and Sundata.

For a *Dolph* movie, *Red Scorpion* is remarkably moralistic; he struggles against his established patriotic and military values, albeit with few words, as he becomes familiar with the guerrillas and a bushman tribe he encounters.

Obviously, there are plenty of explosions, flying bullets, mindless violence and corpses, the Soviet Gunship playing second fiddle only to Dolph himself. Considering his memorable stone-faced portrayal of superhuman Russian boxer in *Rocky 4*, he's a little typecast here,

even to the point that the last third of the movie sees him wearing only a pair of shorts. With frenzied automatic weapon action so prevalent, Dolph is also paying homage to that other famous Stallone series, *Rambo*, although this time both enemy and hero are Russian.

As a sell-through *Red Scorpion* would be poor value—unless you're a big Dolph fan you won't want to watch it more than twice—but a hundred minutes of lively violent action with a real story (gasp!) is a mild rarity you should consider on a quiet night at home. Warren Lapworth



Hero Gibson (left) — another fight

here) is largely extraneous and totally lost amongst endless action sequences. Perhaps this should be expected considering Van Damme's past roles as unarmed combat heroes, but it makes for very repetitive viewing—once you've seen two or three fight scenes they get very monotonous and tiresome.

Arch villain Fender is played with suitable venom by Vincent Klyn and is strangely endearing. He's intended to be a character you love to hate but instead turns out to be one you like; this is partly the result of his irritable, melodramatic dialogue, delivered in a deep, rasping, Carlsberg-type voice. Gibson's imposing stage presence makes him appealing, a smooth *Rambo* with spectacular skills. One of the louder and battle-hungry *Flesh* pirates makes

his mark by his (perhaps overly frequent) battle cry, but all other characters disappear in the crowd.

The writer and/or producer of *Cyborg* must be a music fanatic, as instrument manufacturers pop up throughout the film. Gibson Rickenbacker himself is named after two makes of guitar but there are also drum and amplifier companies amongst the character names.

*Cyborg* could really be any martial arts movie, it just happens to be set in a future which is reminiscent of, but inferior to, the *Mad Max* form of cyberpunk. If aimless and plentiful violence appeals to you, take a look; but for most the temptation to switch off will probably prove too great. Warren Lapworth

## THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE AND HER LOVER

**Starring:** Michael Gambon, Helen Mirren, Alan Howard  
**Director** Peter Greenaway  
**Distributor** Palace Video  
**Cert** 18, 125 mins  
**Rental**

The extremely subtle subtexts in this movie are hidden behind a barrage of farting and belching, much of which is done with furious regularity by the irritatingly obnoxious crimelord-cum-restaurantier played by Michael Gambon. His wife, played by Helen Mirren, is severely disenchanted with his boring bad manners. After all,

after near discovery by the rancid Gambon, is screwed by said Howard.

In between courses of the meal we are witness to the increasingly desperate plight of the two lovers as they strip naked and hide in various meat lockers and trucks to escape Gambon's vengeful eyes. There is also a vicious side-serving of sadistic violence from Gambon against various members of his cringing staff.

So finally, in this cluttered Greenaway onslaught, where, you might ask, does the cook come in? Well, he's the one who has to dress Mr Howard when



Michael Gambon tucks into a lover-ly meal

she's had a whole lifetime with the slob and we've only had to suffer it for a few minutes. So when fellow diner Alan Howard takes an unspoken interest in her, she goes to the ladies' room and,

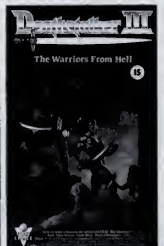
Gambon decides to try fricasséed lover. Ah, cannibalism thrown in for good measure! But the rest is just too dreary. John Gilbert

## DEATHSTALKER 3: The Warriors From Hell

**Starring:** John Allen Nelson  
**Director** Alfonso Corona  
**Distributor** Vestron Video  
**Cert** 15, 81 mins  
**Rental**

Why oh why can no one get their act together and produce a great sword and sorcery epic? The ponderously pretentious *Conan the Barbarian* would seem to have spawned nothing but ludicrous clones such as this offering.

Forget the plot, just accept this summing up: Take a load of cheap (Mexican) landscape, a few horses, a rabble of extras, add a princess or two, a good and a bad wizard, a few bare boobs and a cut-price US 'star', then pretend you're really doing *Dynasty*, but with a hint of *Soap* to keep your viewer amused, lace it all with ersatz *Poledouris* musak for period feel—oh, and don't forget the director and a pot of glue to fix the paper sets—and you end up



with, you guessed it, *Deathstalker 3!*

They may have had fun making it, but why do we have to endure watching it? Oliver Frey



# Collectables Collectables

**FEAR** takes a look at some recent video releases on sell-thru – all priced at £9.99 each.

From Palace come five titles in their horror series.

Firstly *Trick or Treat*, in which high school student Eddie resurrects his pop idol Sammi Curr by playing his last album backwards. Curr's dream was to play at the college prom night but he was too outrageous for the powers that be. However, because of Eddie's doings Curr gets his chance.

Unfortunately, what must have seemed like a good idea for a film degenerates into the usual lets-kill-a-few-teenagers movie.

In *Dream Demon*, young socialite Diane has pre-nuptial nerves and a hell of a lot of nasty nightmares that merge with reality to produce a somewhat confusing and ultimately very boring film.

In *Night of the Demons*, it's Halloween again with two weirdo girls who throw a party in a disused funeral parlour. The usual crowd of ageing teenagers are in attendance and, during the course of the evening, some of

them are zombified in a number of nasty ways. Will anyone escape unscathed? Do we care? I doubt it. Reasonable entertainment, as long as you've downed a few cans of the amber nectar.

It's murder most foul in *Vampire at Midnight*. The LA cops are baffled by a series of slayings, girls have their throats slashed and their bodies are left drained of blood. Lieutenant Roger Stutter (Jason Williams) is on the case; can he track down and trap the hypnotist Vampire who has so much sway over the power-hungry girls? This is a rather good thriller with some very nasty killings and a super performance from Gustav Vintas as the Vampire. Worth seeing.

Anthony Perkins plays yet another manic part in this Jekyll and Hyde variant, *Edge of Sanity*. It's the usual stuff, but this time Hyde is more obsessed with his sexual hang-ups and there is lots of kinky sex before he despatches the unfortunate ladies of the night. Although it is fairly well



*Trick or Treat*



*Vampire at Midnight*: a great slash and suck movie



*Night of the Demons*: worth an arm and a leg?



Sex and violence: punter Perkins on the *Edge of Sanity*



*Dream Demon*

made, the plot of the film is rather silly, and as Hyde Perkins looks like an ageing, badly made-up drag queen. However, if you're into sexual fantasies with a little blood thrown in, I guess this one is for you.

## TIME GUARDIAN

On offer from Guild Home Video is *The Time Guardian*: a time travelling city heavily damaged in a battle with dreaded cyborgs is forced to land for repairs in 1988. Time guardian Ballard is sent to the Australian outback to make preparations. Unfortunately for us he spends most of his time romantically involved with a local Aussie girl. Boring: don't waste your 'time' with this one.



Also from Guild comes *Witchboard*: at a party a friend of Linda's shows her the ways of the Ouija and calls up the spirit of ten year old David. When she is left on her own Linda makes contact with young David herself. Or has she? Evil spirits are now on the loose and they mean to possess Linda, but boyfriend Jim has other ideas, and the fight is on. Fairly pacey thriller with a few nice moments to make you jump.

## POLANSKI DOUBLE

Released by Odyssey, two black and white classics by Roman (Rosemary's Baby) Polanski: *Repulsion* (1965) tells the story of Carol, a Belgian manicurist working in Sixties' London. She suffers neurotic withdrawal and



Catherine Deneuve, feeling repulsed



All at sea in *Cul de Sac*

in a strange delirium she locks herself in her flat and has hallucinations of cracked walls with hands reaching out to grab her. At night a phantom rapist visits her bedroom. When her boyfriend - and then later the landlord - visit, both are horribly murdered. Catherine Deneuve is excellent as the neurotic Carol. Beautifully shot, the film creates a genuinely depressing atmosphere.

In the following year (1966) Polanski make the marvellous black comedy, *Cul de Sac*, winner of the top award at that year's Cannes film festival. Two wounded gangsters on the run arrive at a remote castle on the

Northumbrian coast owned by eccentric former businessman (Donald Pleasance) and his beautiful wife (Françoise Dorléac). The gangsters demand refuge while they await instructions from their boss. American actor Lionel Stander is terrific as the gangster who plays bizarre games and menaces his unwilling hosts. Naturally, it all ends in tears. Great performances all round in this beautifully made and marvellously entertaining film.

## ELM STREET

From K-tel, the documentary *Elm Street: The Making of a Nightmare* takes you behind the scenes of *Elm Street 4: The Dream Master*. There are interviews with Robert Englund (Freddy) and director Rennie Harlin, together with special effects secrets revealed. The make-up boys show how they put Freddy together, plus Harlin rehearses and shoots a scene from the movie. And very interesting it all is too. Definitely one for all Freddy fans.  
David Western

## THIS IS HORROR VOLUMES ONE TO FOUR

Distributor DD Distribution  
Cert 18, 41-48 mins

The covers of this range of four (so far) videos proclaim that the material on the tapes is from the 'Archives of Stephen King's World of Horror'. What they do not tell you is the story behind the material on the tapes.

True, we see Stephen King walking around outside his house in Maine. There are even some short segments in which he is interviewed. But these were produced several years ago in the space of one interview session and at a time when King was producing Halloween specials. Not so hot, huh? But the short interviews with top directors and special effects technicians combined with clips from movies which have yet to make it into Britain give this series of sell-through tapes a certain legitimate purpose.

Tape One contains a profile/interview with Dario Argento. Some onset shots of Argento's latest film, *Two Evil Eyes*, are shown, but the majority of footage comes from his earlier movies such as *Creepers*. This is followed by a well constructed interview with cult director Brian Yuzna, with sneak previews of *Society* and *The Bride of the Re-animator*. A study of cinematic female vampires is next and the tape is capped by an interview with effects guru Steve Johnson.

Tape Two takes an uninspired visit to the set of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3*. Various production people witter on about the movie and

some guy waves a chainsaw around for the edification of the viewer. Next up, the Cohen brothers and a relatively unknown little shocker called *Blood Simple*. The segment does make you want to see the movie – if you haven't already – and the Cohens are clever filmmakers. The tape is topped with a look at Alfred Hitchcock and the screening of promo reel for *Psycho*. Worth a watch.



Tape Three looks at the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series with footage from *Dream Child*, talks to the prime movers at the KNB effects stable – check out our letters' page – then talks to Charles Band and Fred Olen Ray about moviemaking on a minuscule budget. It is the least interesting of the packages, but no doubt *Nightmare* fans will enjoy the Freddy round-up.

Finally, *Tape Four* explores the anthology show in the movies and on television. A look at horror pets follows but it totally misses out on Stephen King's *Pet Semetary* cat and goes instead for some quirky scenes from an alligator movie. The short movie adaptation of Stephen King's *Woman in the Room* comes under the knife next, followed by a trip around the two *Heilraiser* movies with more footage from the first film than the second.

At an average of 44 minutes a tape, this range of videos is not worth its £9.99 (each!) price tag. There is nothing of substance on the tapes; most of the interviews are shallow and the visuals tell you less than the static pictures in an ordinary film magazine. Being highly biased, the best tape for me is number one with its decent interview with the fascinating Brian Yuzna and the quirky Argento bio; the worst is number three, with literally no new material whatsoever.

I hope this series will grow on me as more tapes are released. But if I were the producers I would model the series on the *Hard Rock* video magazines, which are well put together and more substantial than these offerings. However, the package is a good idea which, though needing improvement, may work out.

John Gilbert

## JUNGLE ANTICS

### TARZAN IN MANHATTAN

**Starring:** Joe Lara, Tony Curtis, Kim Crosby, Jan-Michael Vincent, Jimmy Medina-Taggart  
**Director** Michael Schultz  
**Distributor** RCA/Columbia  
**Cert** 15, 95 mins  
**Rental**

Chimpanzees, rabid lions, cannibals, conveniently positioned vines and yodelling war cries are what most of us associate with Tarzan, long-haired hero of the African jungle. But in this lightweight, lighthearted flick the Lord of the Apes mixes with skyscrapers, streetcars, crime bosses and mohair suits.

Tarzan's relatively peaceful life in the jungle is thrown violently into perspective when the gorilla who raised him is killed and his chimpanzee companion, Cheetah, is kidnapped by an American hunter. He pursues him to New York and, lacking a visa, is arrested. But you can't keep a good ape-man down and Tarzan breaks out to continue his search.

With a break of matches and a cigar band as his only clues (how tactically clichéd!), Tarzan teams up with cabbie Jany (of course) and her father, Archie. Together they discover an illegal trading ring for animal experimentation, headed



Tarzan in Manhattan, left to right: Tony Curtis, Kim Crosby, Jan-Michael Vincent and Joe Lara with Cheetah

by an upper class boss played by Jan-Michael Vincent. Can even a scantily clad muscular hippie save our cute little animal friends?

Of course he can! In a family movie as inoffensive and happy-go-lucky as this there's never a second's doubt that there'll be a happy ending. Tarzan himself (Joe Lara) is the only risqué element of the story, as he feels uncomfortable in anything more than loin cloth and moccasin boots – he's never fully clothed for longer than a few minutes. Personally, I preferred Ron Ely's interpretation of the apeman, seen in the TV series, but Lara's youthful Eighties Tarzan is a reasonable and muscular substitute, his yodel apparently a direct copy of Ely's.

Tony Curtis as Archie is his usual amusing and stylish self but others are of the type we associate with glossy, preprocessed

American soaps. Indeed, *Tarzan in Manhattan* bears a suspicious resemblance to a TV movie; fade outs/ins make regular appearances, as if for commercial breaks, where simple cuts would have been infinitely more effective. Certainly if your local TV station relayed this fun but inconsequential film it would be preferable to paying £1.50 to rent it for the night.

Edgar Rice Burroughs would probably turn in his grave if he saw these latest exploits of his jungle character, but if you're looking for something that the kids can watch without being shocked – unless you consider a near-naked man and an ape being best friends dubious – swing by your local video store. But forget the battle-yodel, otherwise the shopkeeper will probably refuse to serve you.

Warren Lapworth

### LIVING DOLL

**Starring:** Gary Martin, Mark Jax, Eartha Kitt, Katie Orgill  
**Director** Peter Litten, George Dugdale  
**Distributor** MGM/UA  
**Cert** 18, 90 mins  
**Rental**

Don't get your hormones all hot. Page Three girl Katie Orgill may have a role in this movie – she plays the living doll of the title, a young woman running a hospital flower shop – but she dies suddenly and falls into the hands of Howard, a part-time morgue assistant who has worshipped her from afar and cannot accept that she has popped her clogs.

Howard steals her body, takes it home, and acts as if the poor dead thing is his wife. Naturally, the corpse, which was badly stitched up during the autopsy, begins to decay, much to Eartha Kitt's chagrin when she pops into the tale as Howard's landlady. She has the place fumigated, believing that rats have infested

her flats, but she'd be in for one big surprise if she was to discover what one of her tenants was keeping in his flat.

Not surprisingly, the story can only get more complicated as the girl seems to come back to life and tells Howard to kill her boyfriend, a task which he manages – but only after some hysterical scenes. Boy and girl do get back together again. But which boy and which

girl? And which side of the grave?

Directors Peter Litten and George Dugdale are now working on *Doctor Who – The Movie* and, although this little video is no great shakes on the horror front, the suggestive humour and generally good performances by a relatively unknown cast show promise for their partnership.

John Gilbert



Living Doll – only Heineken can do this

**THIS IS WHAT  
HAPPENED TO  
THE PEOPLE  
WHO WOULDN'T  
TELL US WHAT  
THEY  
THOUGHT  
OF *FEAR*  
LAST  
TIME!!**



The last batch of your murderous missives before *Raising the Dead* switches to a new format. As of next issue we welcome back *The Spook*, our old gossip queen and lady ligger, who'll arbitrate the arguments and pass fair comment on our post bag. So if you want to be verbally abused send your letters to: **THE SPOOK, FEAR, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB.**

## BARKER BATTLE RAGES ON

### Dear FEAR

Referring to Chris Cowley's letter in issue 13, I would first like to say that Mr Cowley is a pig-ignorant Splatterpunk. So he didn't enjoy the recent Clive Barker publications – well, that's his prerogative. Big fat hairy deal. I feel almost sorry for this poor demented soul. Anyone who thinks that horror consists only of blood and guts should be subscribing to *Gorezone*.

After insulting Stephen King, who I greatly admire, Mr Cowley goes on to make his letter 'three times as long as it needs to be...'. And he should watch what he says about housewives: have you ever seen *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman*?

Without prejudice  
Bjorn, Strathaven, Lanarkshire

### Dear FEAR

Clive Barker backlash, huh? Well, let's hope Clive will answer to the criticisms expressed by Chris Cowley in issue 13. I had rather have him writing fiction. If he doesn't have the time, I volunteer. I have translated into French volumes one, five and six of *Books of Blood*, *The Damnation Game* and *Weaveworld* and I'm now working on *The Great and Secret Show*. This, by the way, is not to give kudos to myself, but to introduce the following statement: as a fan and as a professional, I have had to read Clive's books not once but several times. I haven't been bored yet.

This is purely subjective, of course. Chris Cowley was bored by *The Great and Secret Show*: that's his right. Heck, I was a bit flummoxed by the book myself. This is not what I expected, I thought, then realised that this was a plus. I mean, I read to be surprised, Mr Cowley – don't you?

Anyway, I think your criticism is unfair, and can prove it. In 1984, at Fantasycon IX, French writer Gilles Bergal interviewed Clive Barker for the French fanzine *Mater Tenebrarum*. Here's what Clive had to say:

'After I finish the stories for *Books of Blood* volumes three, four and five, I would like to write a big thriller and also some fantasy novels. I don't want to be labelled as a horror writer, not because I don't like horror, but because I want to do a lot of other things: I want to do whatever it's possible to do in the field of imaginative

writing. It excites me. I want to write science fiction, I want to write fantasy, and so on. I would love to do illustrated books. I don't think it's very wise to be put in a certain slot. People say, 'Oh, he's a horror writer', and that's it. It's much better to do a lot of things. The trouble is, you have to go slowly, and I'm very impatient: I want it to happen fast, and it takes some time to get these things done, but next year I hope to do several of them, including the first part of a big fantasy novel, and I would like to write an erotic novel, a big, erotic novel.'

So I don't think it's fair to say Clive has 'sold out'. He has obviously been thinking about *Weaveworld* and *The Art* for a long time and I, for one, do not feel he has given up 'straight horror' (for lack of a better term).

I don't want to quarrel with you, Mr Cowley; anybody who likes the writings of Skipp and Spector, Ray Garton, Dan Simmons must know his stuff. Have you read Simmons' marvellously moving mainstream novel, *Phases of Gravity*? And his extravagantly intelligent space opera, *Hyperion*? My guess is you have only read his two horror novels, *Song of Kali* and *Carrión Comfort*. When you read his other works, you will think he has 'sold out'. He has not. Like Clive Barker, Dan Simmons is an excellent writer of imaginative fiction who doesn't allow genre barriers to hinder him.

Jean-Daniel Breque, Paris, France

## RUDE AND REACTIONARY

### Dear Ms Coster/FEAR

I felt I must write to defend my writing against the particularly snide comment you printed after my letter in the January edition of *FEAR*. Let me put the matter straight.

Firstly my comment 'nothing too nasty to put off the housewives' referred to established research on genre readership. The writings of Douglas E Winter, Kirby MacCauly and the non-fiction work of Stephen King (precise references available on request) discuss extensive market research which discovered that the vast majority of horror fiction readers were married women who were not working. Therefore I feel that my use of the word 'housewives' was certainly just-

tified. As a psychologist with a number of publications to my name, I am aware that the use of particular terms can be considered insensitive by certain individuals but I do not believe that referring to someone as a 'housewife' or 'househusband' is insulting. If I had referred to people as 'queers' or 'tarts' I would have expected an attack but in this case I feel that your comments were rude and over-reactionary.

Furthermore, you have the nerve to state annoyance that I have merely assumed my knowledge of reading habits (when I have, in fact, based them on factual evidence) and then you assume that I am a man merely because I abbreviate my name to Chris (haven't you ever heard of the name Christine?). This is just as strong an example of stereotyping as any of my comments. Let's face it, nobody's perfect. Not even you.

If I have offended you or anyone else I apologise and expect a reply from you in the next edition of your magazine. I am sure *FEAR* readers who may be considering writing to the magazine would like to know that they will not be slagged off and then refused a chance to defend themselves. Chris Cowley, Abertridwr, Caerphilly

**Patience Coster replies:** *It was not the use of the word 'housewife' that I objected to (why on earth should I?) but the context within which the word was used, which I thought gave it a perjorative meaning. Why not say instead: 'nothing too nasty to put off the vast majority of horror fiction readers?' Wouldn't that have conveyed more clearly what you meant to say? And, by the way, I most certainly did not assume that you were 'a man' (noun); in actual fact I said you had made 'macho' (adjective) assumptions. These are not an exclusively male province; women – myself included – often make them too.*

## TABOO GOT THROUGH

### Dear FEAR

Having just managed to obtain a copy of *Taboo* 2, I noticed that S Clay Wilson's illustration of a rape scene was present despite Stephen Bissette's remark, in *FEAR* 5, that it would have to be replaced in the UK edition.

Does this mean that British lays have been relaxed and more adult comics of this type will be available in Britain? Jason, Norfolk  
PS: Any news on author(s) Michael Slade?

No, the laws of this country have not been relaxed as regards adult comics; the copy of *Taboo* you obtained must just have snuck through customs on its own. On the subject of Michael Slade: we hope to interview him in a couple of months. Keep reading *FEAR* for further news.

# FEAR

## PARTIES WITH SOCIETY

● **MEET THE GUYS** and gals who put together what's likely to be this year's scariest fantasy. Words just fail to describe it: You'll just have to wait and see...

● **WES CRAVEN**, director of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and the infamous *Last House on the Left*, has a new movie *Shocker* for you. He gives us the special effects breakdown and reveals his attitudes towards films with a similar theme. We mention no names – until next issue.

● **ANNE RICE**, writer of the Vampire Chronicles, *The Mummy* and a series of erotic fantasies, reveals all in another Stanley Winter exclusive.

● **HARDWARE** – more news and pics from what is likely to be this year's hottest science fiction horror movie. And it was filmed in the UK!

### ADD TO THIS

● Donald Pleasance, Dick Tracy, Jacob's Ladder, Gremlins 2, *Nightmare* 5 about to hit Britain, together with another splattering of the latest, greatest *FEAR* fiction, and you've got...

## FEAR ISSUE No. 16

... That's the surprise!  
**ON SALE March 15**